A Composite Theory of Transformations and Narrativity for the Music of Danny Elfman in the Films of Tim Burton

By

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ABSTRACT

Much discussion concerning Danny Elfman's music in collaboration with Tim Burton has centered on the creation of an inimitable sound through instrumentation to match the typical gothic, quirky visuals. Passing mention has been made of a tendency to use distinguishing themes which are frequently manipulated throughout a film, as well as atypical harmonic progressions and sonorities, but many of these initial inlets are left unexplored in deference to finding an immediately recognizable "Elfman sound" easily identifiable by larger audiences through timbral colors.

This dissertation explores the notion of a clearly defined musical style through means beyond instrumentation, embracing the use of transformation of theme, harmony, and rhythm/meter as the primary method of expressing the core components of Burton's narrative. Using the concept of a "filmworld," proposed by Daniel Frampton in *Filmosophy*, the consistency of specific elements in Burton's narratives are identified to establish a "Burtonian filmworld" that discusses not only individual films but also encompasses multiple pictures encapsulated within the same narrative space. Similarly, through the use of the filmworld, film music becomes an equal contributor in the explication of the narrative within the self-contained entity of the film.

The elements of melody, harmony, and rhythm/meter are treated individually, discussing issues in terminology and current trends within film music analysis, before identifying commonly recurring models contained within Elfman's film scoring technique and their relationship to patterns in Burtonian narrative. Beyond simple repetition, however, each component explores its independent transformative nature, identifying corollaries between distinct transformational processes and changes in narrative states. Using *The Nightmare Before Christmas* as a case study, a thorough analysis of the songs explores a "Composite Theory" of transformations and narrativity, combining the shifting states of melody, harmony, and meter to produce a reading of Burton's narrative contained within his filmworld—but devoid of his directorial hand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through the personal and professional strife that accompanied this project from the outset, the Music Theory and Composition faculty at the University of Kansas has been unwavering in their support and assistance. I am forever indebted to these incredible individuals who have worked so hard to foster my growth. I would like to give a special and sincere thank you to Scott Murphy, who took my deep interest in film music and encouraged me to follow my true passions. His continuous contributions and suggestions have been invaluable in guiding my work and research. I hope to continue the legacy and opportunity presented to me by the faculty and my committee, who have done so much to prepare me as a person, scholar, student, and musician.

Just as I feel I have been blessed with the greatest of opportunities at the University of Kansas, I experience the same appreciation and pride for my undergraduate upbringing. The "small school in WV" laid the foundation which opened so many doors. From mentors, to colleagues, to friends, these individuals did not simply teach me music; they prepared me for life and remain committed to their mission and their students past and present. I sincerely thank Timothy DeWitt, Judson Bracey, Lillian Long, Hooi Yin Boey, and Lewis Hall for being those pillars—past, present, and future.

The encouragement of friends and family certainly kept this project a possibility, even during the darkest of times. To my parents Lee and Kathy, my brother Donny, and his wife, Renée—as well as their children, my Turtle and Chalupa-Batman—thank you all for your continued support, especially during the most frustrating of periods. My "little girl," my dog Abbie, has been with me for this entire journey, and has been to Hell and back with me (and on her own); her companionship and loyalty is never lost on me. While there are too many friends to name all, a special thank you to Kristina, for continuing to pick me up every time I had fallen down even when I felt I did not deserve that helping hand. Words seem so inadequate for the appreciation I feel for the moral support. Chris, Brink, and Larry, thank you all for blessing me with three extra brothers outside my family.

To Dad – thank you for lying to me so I could finish. I love you, and I miss you…

To Deron – the hat always stays on…

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INTRODUCTION

In a career that has spanned more than thirty years, three continents, and over one hundred film and television projects, Danny Elfman is most commonly associated with one working partner: Tim Burton. Despite venturing into a multitude of genres and establishing himself as a diverse and eclectic composer and musician on the in the studio, on the stage, and even in the symphony hall, he remains largely isolated as the integral part of the Burtonian aesthetic, providing the aural component to the visual and narratological triumvirate. In this restricted lens, the focal point has centered on capturing the elements of the gothic, grotesque, quirky, and bizarre generally inherent in Burton's films, and it is usually through instrumentation that the quintessential Elfman sound is characterized in discussions of his work. This distinct fingerprint remains identifiable through Elfman's *oeuvre*, and it is often this quality that directors seek when looking to capture "his voice" when the composer is not available.

To restrict the composer's definitive technique to orchestration alone, however, would ignore the inherent properties of music in deference to the immediately identifiable surface features. Moreover, some of these qualities have been described as unique and peculiar in their own right, but usually become disregarded to focus instead on the timbral qualities of Elfman's scores. The potential for a definitive "Elfman sound" *within* the music has been posited but remains relatively unexplored; aside from an in-depth analysis of one primary film theme in a text by Janet Halfyard, Elfman's articulation of Burton's narratives through such techniques as melody, harmony, and rhythm/meter remain an unexplored area of potential.

What follows is an attempt to break through this timbral barrier and invert the prevailing paradigm by illuminating the qualities that have been overshadowed by orchestration. Embracing the notion that the Elfman sound extends beyond instrumentation, the subsequent analyses explore the potential of the film score contributing to the explication of the diegesis, and changes in musical states corresponding to changes in narrative states. Building from the proposal of the term "transformation" from the initial thematic analysis, this study will explore the potential of transforming theme, harmony, and meter independently as well as interrelatedly, developing a "Composite Theory" of

transformational narrativity that interweaves these processes into a cohesive web of musico-narrative articulation.

Chapter Outline and Methodology

The nature of this project requires a distinct separation and exploration of each of its components before a final unification for an individual case study, where the previously divided content can interact in unison. By isolating melody, harmony, and rhythm/meter from each other and surveying how the individual facets interact with the narrative, a more strictly focused series of definitions and concepts can be developed and applied within the filmography under study. This restrictive lens facilitates the formation of a thread of narrative continuity across multiple films, permitting a more pronounced connection between characteristics of the diegesis in multiple films of the same director and the aural articulation of those aspects by the composer.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation will discuss the use of music within film to express elements of narrative as well as situate the current state of Danny Elfman scholarship in academia through a literature review. Prevailing trends and analyses of Elfman's work, including recurring themes and topics in academic discourse, will be identified and examined to emphasize areas of oversight or conflict from upon which this work will build. Chapters 2-4 will present an individual exploration of melody/theme, harmony, and rhythm/meter respectively, with a brief context with respect to film music analysis terminology and discourse for the subsequent analyses. Each chapter will identify recurring patterns that express a narrative quality of Elfman's music in Burton's films, particularly those which stretch across multiple films with similar narrative qualities. Chapter 5 will serve as the capstone of the project, bringing the transformational processes and ideas of the preceding pages to fruition.

Chapter 2 explores the melodic/thematic tendencies of Elfman's music that are frequently cited as a common technique of his film scoring process and situates his work within a (re)defined interpretation of filmic leitmotiv technique. In positioning Elfman's melodic trends in the context of historical film music practices and terminological applications, the notion of Elfman's leitmotiv

patterns will be recontextualized with a more restrictive terminological basis. Recurring motivic patterns with shared narrative contexts across films will be identified and explored in addition to the construction of similar themes within a single film or series. The notion of thematic development and transformation will focus not on processes throughout individual films, but on original construction and relationships within the narratives itself.

Chapter 3 identifies the current application of transformational analysis in film music scholarship and its potential effectiveness in analyzing Elfman's triadic harmonic vocabulary and its connection to narrative, focusing on the establishment of "leitmotivic kernels" with introductory harmonic progressions and thematic ideas. While many of his works remain adventurous with respect to the free use of dissonance and tonal practices, certain harmonic transformations with distinct narrative associations are identified in Elfman's music—used in either a similar or ironic fashion to common patterns in contemporary film music repertoire.

Chapter 4 discusses the role of rhythmic and metric perception and organization and its relationship to Burtonian reality and fantasy. By mapping groupings of duple and triple patterns of metric, submetric, and hypermetric structures, narrative conditions with respect to character, plot, setting, and psychological/emotional states can be tracked, with changes in such conditions reflected in shifts on various levels of metric patterns. Additionally, overlapping patterns of duple and triple groups which produce instances of metric dissonance on different metric levels can reveal degrees of psychological and narratological tension.

Chapter 5 presents the confluence of the individual qualities explored in the previous three sections within a singular, wholly Burtonian narrative in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Following the process and nature in which the film was produced, the songs written for the film will be analyzed, surveying the relationship between melody, harmony, and meter and its expression of the narrative. The instrumental score will be noted from a retrospective position to the songs, receiving their primary content from them.

Concerning the Notion of Transformation

The original impetus for applying "transformational principles" to Elfman's music stems primarily from the recent work by Frank Lehman and Scott Murphy, as well as others who have applied harmonic transformation theory to film music analysis. More specifically, Frank Lehman's dissertation has explored the efficacy of utilizing neo-Riemannian transformations to describe the harmonic motion between successive chords as a means to articulate individual motions as well as develop recurring patterns and networks of relationships that unfold in correlation with the filmic events. Such gestures between successive chords can be expressed through a combination of three primary transformations: parallel (**P**), which exchanges a triad for its parallel major or minor (C major or minor, or C+ → C-);[1] relative (**R**), which exchanges a triad for its relative major or minor (C+ → A-); and *Leittonwechsel* (**L**), which exchanges the root of a major triad for its leading tone (C+ → E-), or the chordal fifth of a minor triad with the pitch a minor sixth above the bass, ascending by semitone.[2] In addition to these three primary transformations, a class of secondary operations are frequently incorporated: *Nebenverwandt* (**N**), which exchanges a major triad for its minor subdominant (C+ → F-) and can be constructed through a combination of successive **RLP** transformations; SLIDE (**S**), which preserves the chordal third between major and minor triads (C+ → C♯-), or **LPR**;[3] and Hexatonic pole (**H**), which exchanges a major triad for its hexatonic pole, with all voices of the original

[1] Throughout the rest of the document, the nomenclature of identifying the quality of triads using the (+) symbol for major and (-) symbol for minor will be used. The labels of "major" and "minor" will be reserved for the identification of keys/tonal centers. Transformational labels in prose may be identified by either the full name (if a single process), or by the single-letter abbreviation. All labels within score excerpts will be identified by abbreviations.

[2] Brian Hyer's dissertation is commonly cited as the principal origins of this methodology, although a renewal of Riemannian theory can be seen in the writings of David Lewin approximately seven years prior. This summary of primary transformations is drawn from Brian Hyer, *Tonal Intuitions in* Tristan und Isolde*,* Ph. D. diss., Yale University (1989), 162-74. For David Lewin's preceding work, see David Lewin, "A Formal Theory of Generalized Tonal Functions," in *Journal of Music Theory*, 26, 1 (1982), 23-60, or David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[3] See David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 178.

chord moving by semitone (C+ → A♭-), or **LPL**.[4] Preference is generally given to the shortest combination of (primary) transformations, although secondary transformations may be incorporated into the label.

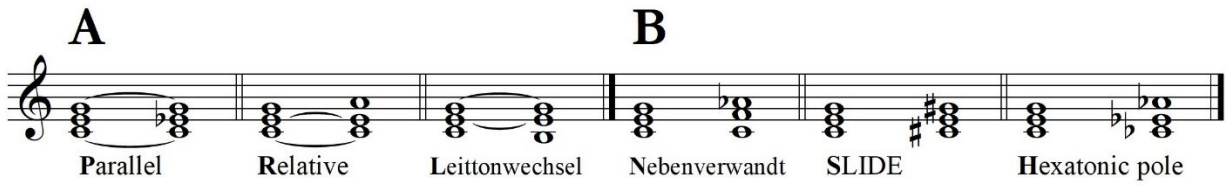

Figure 0.1. List of primary (A) and secondary (B) neo-Riemannian transformations.

The very idea of "transformation," however, extends far beyond harmony and embraces other musical qualities. When taken in this broad sense, its definition comes to encompass the idea of a change in state or appearance from its original presentation or preceding matter, and it is this more expansive approach to the idea of musical transformation that the author will assume when discussing the term. Thus, the idea of "transforming" a melody suggests a change in the original presentation of a motive, theme, or other characteristic material in a manner that will extend beyond instrumentation, while a "transformation" of rhythm or, especially, meter will denote a shift in the organization in the prevailing perceptive groupings of pulse layers.

Concerning Musical Examples

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of all music excerpts utilized within this document. Access to any available hard copies of these materials is greatly restricted; every means to contact the film studios, music libraries, and the composer has been utilized throughout the process

[4] This brief summary is drawn from Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Triad's Second Nature* (New York: Oxford, 2012), 17-61. Cohn's book organizes these six triadic transformations differently from what is used in this summary: **L**, **P**, and **H** are considered "hexatonic transformations," while **N**, **S**, and **R** are classified as "Weitzmann transformations." Origins of this work can be traced to Richard Cohn, "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late Romantic Triadic Progressions," in *Music Analysis*, 15, 1 (1996), 9-40.

to acquire original sources as well as appropriate permissions from the studios and the composer.[5] The response to all queries, however, remained greatly limited. Supplemental resources available from studios and libraries, including condensed scores, song books, and piano scores have been consulted for additional resources. Commercial soundtracks have been referenced to facilitate the listening and transcribing process, but have not been considered the definitive version of the excerpt in question. The author assumes any and all responsibility for any errors and the corresponding effects on analyses and extrapolations. All excerpts under consideration will be used in compliance with the United States Copyright Act, Chapter 1, Section 107.[6]

Music examples will be identified using two primary designations: reductions and transcriptions. Any excerpt given the identification of *reduction* is taken from a complete score. While the overall presentation may be condensed and some content may be omitted, all material present has been drawn from an original handwritten source, typeset score, synthesizer printout, etc. All reductions will include specific cue titles and measure numbers. Because the original source of the reduction comes from a written musical example which can be traced to a printed resource, no time stamp within the film will be provided. Any music excerpt that is designated as a *transcription* is dictated primarily by the author. Transcriptions may incorporate outside influence from a secondary source, including the aforementioned studio-approved commercial books and soundtracks, to facilitate the dictation process. Often, transcriptions will be greatly reduced in terms of texture to focus on specific content (melody, harmony, rhythm/meter, etc.). Because no definitive title for transcriptions is available, the designation from the commercial soundtrack or scene description from the DVD will be provided, as well as a time stamp of the corresponding scene.

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[5]Annette Davison discusses this issue in "Copyright and Scholars' Rights," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, 1, 1 (2007): 9-13. Davison notes, "I hope, unanimously agreed that we do not need to ask for rights and permissions to reproduce, review, and critique the works of others in non-commercial publications" (13). All materials which could be purchased through studios or other publication sources have been obtained through the appropriate means.

[6] As quoted from the United States Copyright Office, Chapter 1, Section 107 (Limitations on exclusive right: Fair Use) is stated as follows: "Notwithstanding the provisions of [S]ections 106 and 106A, the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, and is not infringement of copyright." Transcriptions for such research fall under Criterion 1 outlined in fair use (use for nonprofit educational purposes).

Much of Elfman's work is often completed using synthesizers, which freely interchange enharmonic pitches and/or provide parts in multiple keys simultaneously. Additionally, Elfman and his orchestrators frequently do not incorporate key signatures and allow enharmonic pitches and keys to operate freely, creating obscure surface collections of harmonies. To facilitate the clarity of excerpts, the author will assume an enharmonic, twelve-tone pitch space as well as any and all enharmonic interpretations are valid and equivalent; however, the author will assume some of the customary latitude in the spelling of pitches based on melodic, harmonic, and other pertinent contexts Similarly, Elfman freely mixes time signatures depending on the rhythmic activity within individual instruments, such as $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{12}{8}$ operating simultaneously in the opening titles to *Batman*. For the purposes of clarity and consistency, all excerpts will be written in one meter signature. Significant deviations from a given source, either a full score or supplemental material, will be noted.

While some in the music industry and academia questioned the authenticity of Elfman's authorship due to his lack of formal training at the beginning of his film music career, the debate has silenced virtually completely. Additionally, the work contained within this dissertation is focused almost entirely on music attributed to Danny Elfman. To reflect this sense of authorship and facilitate the labeling of examples, all music excerpts will be assumed to have been composed by Danny Elfman unless otherwise noted and will only provide the name of the film from which the example is taken. Any example that is not derived from Elfman's work with Tim Burton will be provided with the full citation in its identification.

CHAPTER 1:

ESTABLISHING A CONTEXT FOR ANALYSIS THROUGH NARRATIVE AND MOVING BEYOND PREVIOUS STUDIES

The intimate connection of Elfman's score to Burton's narrative remains a central component to analyses of the composer's work with the auteur. The symbiotic working relationship between the pair has produced fifteen films as of August 2014, with the score considered a critical piece in establishing the distinct style associated with the director. Within Burton's films, the score is considered as integral to the composite as the visual, providing the auditory experiences to match the ocular aesthetics. In a typical Burtonian setting, music is not simply subsidiary but engages both the filmgoer and the events within the film, participating in narrative explication for the attending viewer.

To consider Elfman's music within the role of narrative articulation in Burton's films, a historical (re)evaluation of the perceived function of film music and developing a new interpretive model through contemporary film philosophy may yield greater analytical insight into the narrativizing capacity of Elfman's score (and, potentially, film music in general). Additionally, a survey of previous scholastic undertakings of Elfman's work with Burton will provide an initial foundation of both methodology and terminology while simultaneously revealing potential avenues from which more in-depth analyses can evolve. Uniting these two currents and exploring the idea of a "Burtonian filmworld" which encompasses individual as well as interrelated narratives can facilitate the formulation of a more composite analytical approach. This new methodology is guided by the underlying notion of changing narrative states and their correlation with changing musical states, generalized under the conceptual umbrella of "transformation."

Historical Interpretations of the Role of Film Music and its Connection to Narrative

In preliminary discussions about its use in film, music has been considered an active—albeit unequal—partner to the visual events unfolding before the audience's eyes. While discussing the incorporation of music into the motion picture, Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler suggested that the attentive

listening of the concertgoer, which would elevate the status of the aural to that of the visual, is, ultimately, "technologically inferior," even "archaic," to the filmic experience. Adorno and Eisler propose, "The human ear has not adapted itself to the bourgeois rational and, ultimately, highly industrialized order as readily as the eye. . . . One might say that to react with the ear, which is fundamentally a passive organ in contrast to the swift, actively selective eye, is in a sense not keeping with the present advanced industrial age and its cultural anthropology."[1] The natural gravitation of the ear is towards the human voice, establishing a hierarchical ordering of the audio track known as *vococentrism* which places speech above all other audio cues, including sound effects and music.[2]

Aside from simply extending beyond the capacity of the average, non-trained listener, however, music's role in its early stages of the filmic medium was confined largely to supplement the visuals on the screen. This predilection to favor the visual qualities overwhelmingly over sound has its antecedents in the emergence of the sound film, more specifically in the influx of adding music to the sound track. Raymond Spottiswoode suggested that during the 1930s music, despite its programmatic connotations of the previous century, is relegated towards the bottom of the aural (let alone filmic) hierarchy; attention of the filmgoer is usually directed towards the natural and realistic, particularly because it is these types of sounds that one can associate with real phenomena. For Spottiswoode, music in film served five distinct roles: imitative, commentative, evocative, contrastive, and dynamic.[3] Even these functions, however, bear some significant limitations; imitative, for instance, is best articulated when paired with speech to highlight delivery or content of the words. Commentative achieves its meaning not from the musical content, but from the story content of the scene itself, such

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[1] Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Composing for Films* (London: Continuum, 1947), 25, 20.

[2] See Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia, 1999), 5-6. In defining vococentrism, Chion notes that "in every audio mix, the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception. . . . If a human voice is part of (a sonic space), the ear is inevitably carried toward it, picking it out, and structuring the perception of the whole around it. The ear attempts to analyze the sound in order to extract meaning from it—as one peels and squeezes a fruit—and always tries to *localize* and if possible *identify* the voice" (5, emphasis in original). Vococentrism will be discussed further below.

[3] Raymond Spottiswoode, *A Grammar of the Film: An Analysis of Film Technique* (Berkeley: University of California, 1950), 190-91.

as the generation of humor from a given situation. It is in the evocative function which music achieves its greatest value and can even surpass the fundamental elements of speech and natural sound in the sound track—but only when viewed in conjunction with the visual film. Spottiswoode summarizes the potential values of music when generated through evocative and dynamic means, relegated to the service of visuals in terms of narrative events and sequences of shots:

> The evocative use can be extended until it replaces speech altogether. It depends on the emotional appeal (recognized in opera) of all music except the purest, and proposes to use it, in conjunction with the visual film, to convey every concept which the story of the of the film demands. . . . But when the action quickens, the emotive music must either strike out a line of its own . . . or it must subordinate itself to merely dynamic function. It must never attempt to follow emotively the rapid changes of feeling which the director may wish to excite in his audience. . . . The score should have no independent purpose, and should be as simple as possible. . . . [I]t must neither impede the director's original intentions, nor supply comments or overtones of meaning of its own."[4]

Aaron Copland's articles in the *New York Times* during the 1940s, reappearing in later editions of his book *What to Listen for in Music*, address the issue of vision superseding all other senses in the filmic experience. While acknowledging that the degree of influence music can provide is proportional to training and (cognizant) perception, he nevertheless argues that, at the minimum, music is an *integral* member of the totality rather than purely supplemental. Copland suggests five specific functions utilized by music in films and can influence the experience and interpretation of audience, regardless of degree of formal training, and provides a detailed summary for each role:

1. *Creating a more convincing atmosphere of time and place*—a technique which is usually assumed through the 19th century Romantic style, regardless of period specificity
2. *Underlining psychological refinements—the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of situation*—achievable through correlation or opposition to scene and narrative
3. *Serving as a kind of neutral background filler*—the "hardest" task of the composer to fill in auditory gaps, particularly in conversations, without overriding the scene

[4] Ibid. 190.

4. *Building a sense of continuity*—particularly in montage, establishing a connective thread for visual images, especially in disparate sequences
5. *Underpinning the theatrical build-up of a scene, and rounding it off with a sense of finality*—a modified "cadential" role, best exemplified in the closing credits of a film serving as an aural capstone[5]

As Copland notes, however, this partial summary centers on only one particular type of music in film: "background" music which is not grounded in the visual presentation of the film. Material whose source is literally presented on the screen offers an additional avenue for exploration, one which carries its own interpretive qualities. For Copland, music's most significant contribution to the final product centers not on its intrinsic qualities, but rather its sensitivity and psychological underpinnings:

> On the whole, though, the score, as any score, is designed to strengthen and underline the emotional content of the entire picture. The best explanation, I think, of just what is the purpose of music in the film has been given by Virgil Thomson. It is his conception that the score of a motion picture supplies a bit of human warmth to the . . . two-dimensional figures on the screen, giving them a communicable sympathy that they otherwise would not have, bridging the gap between the screen and the audience. The quickest way to a person's brain is through his eye but even in the movies the quickest way to his heart and feelings is still through the ear.[6]

For some, the music used within a film could be separated neither from the picture itself, nor from the filmic experience. A fundamental "reality" of this position rested in the notion that the "background music's" existence is entirely predicated on the film itself, and therefore cannot be isolated as a unique entity. Moreover, the presence of a written score, despite its considerable scarcity, does not provide detail beyond musical notation. Its meaning and significance is determined by the visual events which it accompanies, a notion emphasized by the demarcations of scenes and actions on surviving cue sheets. The growth and acceptance of film music—like that of popular music—remained stagnant in musicology through the 1970s, and the subjugation of music in film studies in deference to the visual medium rose to greater disparity during this decade as well. Marks summarizes

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[5] Aaron Copland, "Tip to the Moviegoers: Take Off Those Ear-Muffs," *New York Times* (6 November 1949), 30. The original article lists "six" functions, but the list skips the fourth item in its numeration.

[6] Aaron Copland, "The Aims of Music for Films," *New York Times* (10 March 1940), 7.

the perceived inability of film music to establish itself as a separate entity for both analytical and musicological purposes which dominated the 1970s:

> Through (Odegard's) choice of words he associates film music with concert music as comprising a "repertoire," from which (presumably) selections are performed. Between these two kinds of music, however, a fundamental distinction must be made: unlike concert music, film music does not usually come out of, or go into, a repertoire; it exists only as an accompaniment to a film. . . . Furthermore, since the invention of synchronized sound, film music has been heard not in continuous live performance, but through mechanical reproductions of many fragmentary performances assembled by recording "engineers." In other words, there not only is no repertoire of film music, there are no "pieces of film music" at all—only pieces of film, with music photographically or electromagnetically inscribed on a band alongside the image.[7]

Marks ultimately concludes, "The primary material of film music, both for the audience and the researcher, is not a recording or a score, but the film itself."[8] In discussing the score for *Batman* and the compositional process, Janet Halfyard echoes this sentiment over twenty years later, suggesting, "Film music, however, is not concerned with the inner reality of the composer as such but with the external reality of the film, and the composer's intentions are automatically subordinate to and informed by those of the film and its director."[9] In this antiquated view, film music no longer stands alone or bears purpose beyond the film itself, but instead becomes a subordinate to the larger whole, mediated through an extensive array of external forces. The audio engineer, editor, and, ultimately, the director determine its role and purpose, with little (if any) regard to ideas of compositional design and intent in lieu of the final product.

Thus, the *function* of film music in the context of either the visuals or the experience of viewing the stream of images dominated analytical discussions through the 1970s, relating to the psychological—and subconscious—experience. Rather than subverting its role due to the abstract

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[7] Martin Marks, "Film Music: The Material, Literature, and Present State of Research," *Notes*, Second Series, 36, 2 (Dec., 1979), 283.

[8] Ibid. 283.

[9] Janet Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 18.

nature of background music, however, others have elevated its status primarily through its function in expressing narrative. Douglas Gallez provides a six-part taxonomy for identifying and analyzing function: Introductory and Descriptive—establish general mood/tone for audience as well as setting of narrative); Mood (Background)—provide influence through parallels of imitation/evocation or contrasts (visual or psychological); Realistic (Source)—musical realism expressed through substantiated (visual) sources or production numbers; Dynamic—relating to the visual pacing and continuity (either visual or verbal); Imitative—replicating human, natural, and mechanical sounds; Suspensory and Terminal—end of action and film proper.[10]

Roy Prendergast focuses on the mood/background aspect of film music, noting that its subconscious influence augments the filmic experience. He summarizes, "Music has a way of bypassing the human's normal, rational defense mechanisms. When used properly, music can help build the drama in a scene to a far greater degree of intensity than any of the other cinematic arts. . . . [M]usic evokes a gut reaction unobtainable in any other way."[11] Prendergast further notes that Sergei Eisenstein's self-analysis through an "audiovisual score," where musical events are intimately influenced by (if not synchronized with) visual cues, of Sergei Prokofiev's score to *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) is not always an appropriate analytical model. While musical events may align with the visual, and elements such as contour may be influenced by visual cues, Prendergast emphasizes that such analyses incorporate static shots from the film for validation. While providing immediate correlation of individual moments, it removes a critical aspect for *musical* content and development: the unfolding of time. Although notation may correspond directly to static shots of the film (a foundational claim of audiovisual scores), the progression of musical events may not, creating a disparity that may extend

[10] Dougas W. Gallez, "Theories of Film Music," *Cinema Journal*, 9, 2 (1970): 47.

[11] Roy M. Prendergast, *Film Music: A Neglected Art* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 222.

for several seconds well beyond the influential visual cue. As Prendergast concludes, "Music is an art that moves *through* time, an art that cannot be perceived instantaneously."[12]

The work of Claudia Gorbman, particularly during the 1980s, continued this elevation of the role of film music with respect to narrative. Drawing heavily from the literary theory of Gérard Genette and the work of French *filmologue* Etienne Souriau, Gorbman's work delves into the role of music within a film's unique "time-space universe."[13] In particular, Gorbman incorporates Genette's levels of narrativity, including diegetic (primary), extradiegetic (intruding), and metadiegetic (secondary) to explore music's role in articulating the narrative concepts addressed indirectly from previous studies. Such a shift from the interlocked meanings of music *with* film (paired directly with visual events, such as Prendergast's notion of the audiovisual score) to music with*in* film (as a narrativizing voice integral to the overall diegesis) circumvented one of the central issues of film music's autonomy: time. Music's meaning and role is no longer reliant on the temporal aspects of visual cues, but instead upon the temporal aspects of narrative function.[14] Additionally, the focus on narrative over visual pairing (either parallel or counterpoint) which dominated early discourse of film music's role facilitates the implementation of various cultural and musical codes to express unseen elements of narrativity and the corresponding effects on the viewer—elements susceptible to differing interpretations. Gorbman reverberates the statements of Prendergast from the previous decade, emphasizing the inherent flexibility of the art as opposed to speech (verbal) and purely filmic (visual) methods of articulating the narrative:

> Music removes barriers to belief; it bonds spectator to spectacle, it envelops spectator and spectacle in a harmonious space. Like hypnosis, it silences the spectator's censor. It is suggestive; if it's working right, it makes us a little less critical and a little more prone to dream. . . . Its freedom from the explicitness

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[12] Ibid. 225.

[13] Claudia Gorbman, "Narrative Film Music," in *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980), 195.

[14] Ibid. 199.

> of language or photographic images, its useful denotative and expressive values easily comprehended by listeners raised in the nineteenth-century orchestral tradition, its malleability, its spatial, rhythmic, and temporal values, give it a special and complex status in the narrative film experience. . . . Film music is at once a gel, a space, a language, a cradle, a beat, a signifier of internal depth and emotion as well as a provider of emphasis on visual movement and spectacle. It bonds: shot to shot, narrative event to meaning, spectator to narrative, spectator to audience.[15]

From this narrative-centric position, Gorbman identifies seven principles of classical film music, recalling much of Copland's article to the general public three decades prior:

1. *Invisibility*: The technical apparatus of nondiegetic music remains unseen.
2. *"Inaudibility"*: Music is not meant to be heard consciously. As such it should subordinate itself to dialogue, to visuals—i.e., to the primary vehicles of the narrative.
3. *Signifier of emotion*: Soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasize particular emotions suggested in the narrative . . . but first and foremost, it is a signifier of emotion itself.
4. *Narrative Cueing*:
   a. *Referential/narrative*: Music gives referential and narrative cues, e.g., indicating point of view, supplying formal demarcations, and establishing setting and characters.
   b. *Connotative*: Music "interprets" and "illustrates" narrative events.
5. *Continuity*: Music provides formal and rhythmic continuity—between shots, in transitions between scenes, by filling "gaps."
6. *Unity*: Via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation, music aids in the construction of formal and narrative unity.
7. A given film score may violate any of these principles above, providing the violation is at the service of the other principles.[16]

Nevertheless, Gorbman does not go as far as to concede analytical evaluations across *musical* boundaries—a simultaneous benefit and detriment to the art. As such, film music's removal from narrativity becomes problematic because the film itself is the *raison d'être* for its existence. Gorbman

[15] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: IUP, 1987), 55.

[16] Ibid. 73.

acquiesces that the music serves as a potential mediator between diegesis and spectator, as one "opt(s) to focus attention on the narrative and visual realities before (them)."[17] As a participant in the combinatory effect of the soundtrack (including dialogue and sound effects in addition the music), its evaluative judgments and interpretations fall outside the purely musical paradigm. As she concludes, "To judge film music as we judge 'pure' music is to ignore its status as a part of the collaboration that is the film. Ultimately it is the narrative context, the *interrelations* between music and the rest of the film's system, that determine the effectiveness of film music."[18]

Gorbman's incorporation of literary theory provides a significant epistemological shift in film music analysis away from the film and placing the locus of evaluation upon the film*goer*, utilizing locations of music's narrative voice in the diegesis to discuss how the observer reacts to the semiological codes entwined in the music. Such codes delve into not only the relationship between the music and the film (deemed *cinematic musical codes*), but also into structural elements of the music itself independent of any other act (*pure musical codes*), as well as beliefs and settings acculturated within the viewer (*cultural musical codes*). These unique identities provide a deeply interconnected web amongst viewer, film, and narrative from which music achieves its functional role, regardless of location of narrative voice.[19]

Anahid Kassabian draws much of Gorbman's filmgoer-centric approach, though notes that limitations are inherent in the strictly diegetic/nondiegetic divide or in the categorical organization presented in Gorbman's outline. For Kassabian, the issue arises most prominently in the concept of source scoring, which combines elements of diegetic (source music) and nondiegetic (dramatic scoring) in its narrativizing connotations and freely moves between the two. Gorbman's groupings, she notes, are largely restrictive because they are still rooted in filmic/narrative categorization in which

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[17] Gorbman, "Narrative Film Music," 184.

[18] Ibid. 184, emphasis in original.

[19] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 12-13.

the viewer creates interpretation, but does not account for perceptual differences across viewers of different cultures (let alone interpretive differences).[20] Moreover, Gorbman's categories fail to account for scenic descriptions in totality, instead isolating particular moments and identifying shifts between rather than connections across. For Kassabian, film music function is categorized not by its role in the diegesis and how the filmgoer interprets such locales, but rather from the cultural and pure codes of music one develops within their own societal interactions. Such music uses include *quotation* (transportation of a musical source directly into the film), *allusion* (a type of quotation which is used to invoke references to another narrative), and *leitmotiv* (musical events serving as a queuing mark).[21] Though critical of Gorbman's literary approach, Kassabian echoes many of Gorbman's sentiments concerning the functional role of the film score, particularly categories III, IV, and VI, as well as harkening back to previously identified notions of parallel/counterpoint scoring (albeit with respect to viewer's identification of diegesis, rather than relationship of sound and scene):

> Film music serves three broad purposes: *identification*, *mood*, and *commentary*. In one sense, all (or almost all) music in narrative functions to create mood . . . music that is similar in emotional tone to other threads of the film. . . . *Identifying music* can convey or evoke all of the things mentioned in the definition of leitmotiv—"a character, a place or an object, a certain situation, or a recurrent idea of the plot"—as well as period, time, depth of field, and certain sociological factors. . . . Finally, there exists the possibility of music used as commentary, countermood, or *Verfemdungseffekt*. *Commentary music*, for example, might tell us that a seemingly romantic situation is actually humorous or that the daisy-filled meadow contains some unseen danger, or it might break or prevent suture (prevent us from becoming "absorbed" in the film).[22]

David Neumeyer continues Gorbman's narrative-emphasized approach, but shifts focus from a visuocentric methodology and to a return to Chion's vococentric interpretation. Much like the

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[20] In addition to remaining film-centric in their nature, Kassabian notes that such a priori categories between each other while simultaneously setting up boundaries, prohibiting the intermingling of multiple functions of film music simultaneously and, most importantly, the corresponding effect between such intertextual relationships. See Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 41, for more discussion.

[21] See Ibid. 48-49 for examples of each categorization of musical use/function.

[22] Ibid. 56-57, 59.

hierarchical nature of film viewing itself (which, for Gorbman, always keeps the visual element at the apex), Neumeyer identifies a similar structure within the sound track, placing the voice (speech track) as the zenith of the internal structure, with film music and sound effects below speech. As Neumeyer summarizes, "Music needs voice—or to put it another way, music needs the hierarchy of sound and links to image and narration guaranteed by the voice. Speech mediates for a music that, except in performance and perhaps in spectacle and in mute emotion, really has no place in the cinema except by the historical coincidence of certain theatrical conventions.[23] Because of this hierarchical nature, film music (which, he argues, is a pluralistic term for *any* music utilized in film regardless of location in diegesis) remains in a dialectic with both visual and audio cues, from which the viewer interprets. Such interactions of music with the sound track include referential ("supplying or reinforcing identifying markers of time, place, social status, ethnicity, etc."); expressive ("marker of emotion"); motivic ("in the manner of the motif in literature or motive in music, supplying recurring elements that help to clarify the processes of narrative comprehension").[24] Neumeyer is also quick to identify erroneous interpretations of Gorbman's work, refuting the archaic notion from early sound film that music is most effective when it does not attract attention (thus distracting from the viewing process); the "unheard" nature of music refers more to its relationship with the background (nondiegetic) space—an area defining the world in which the (diegetic) characters interact. Because it persists in a space in which the diegesis may or may *not* interact, it is not necessarily synchronized with the visual cues and operates freely.[25] Neumeyer complements Gorbman's original list, proposing a series of

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[23] David Neumeyer, *Meaning and Interpretation of Music in Cinema* (Bloomington: IUP, 2015), 24.

[24] Ibid. 11.

[25] Ibid. 23-24. Neumeyer summarizes, "Traditional nondiegetic music does not usually seem problematic despite its apparent lack of motivation: its indifference to acoustical fidelity is unmarked, since music, when treated this way, can be understood as a stylized background—like stylized sets or lighting" (23). Much of the discussion is centered on Amy Herzog's reading of Gorbman—one which paralleled a significant portion of film music analysis of the 1990s. Such a dichotomy remains, at least on the surface, a valid consideration, but fails to address the central premise of Gorbman's assertions concerning synchronization. At the focal point of the discussion is its connection to narrative, for that remains paramount in narrative film. Neumeyer argues, "*All* elements of a filmic system, not just music, are subservient to narrative in the classical feature film, a model that, despite technological and stylistic change, persists in its basic outlines into the present day. Underscore music can, and frequently does, 'achieve a dramatic' presence in the context of highly synchronized filmic situations" (24, emphasis in original).

comparisons for analysis of the complete soundtrack structured around a series of "Five Binaries" that organize sound according to the elements of principle, method, space, time, and agency:

1. Clarity vs. Fidelity: priority of sound with respect to nonphysical narrative or physical environment encapsulated in the narrative (acoustical realism)
2. Foreground vs. Background: location in the mix of soundtrack, with respect to level of attention for the filmgoer
3. Diegetic vs. Nondiegetic: paralleling Gorbman's definitions, location of sound within the diegesis (created in physical world of film, or on the level of narration/narrator)
4. Synchronization vs. Counterpoint: echoing early studies of music and sound in film, the coordination of sound with image and the degree of realism achieved
5. Empathy vs. Anempathy: degree of emotional correlation between sound and image, either in parallel or in counterpoint for ironic/detached effect[26]

Neumeyer's willingness to avoid the typical classification system of diegetic and nondiegetic presents an opportunity to expand the narrativizing capabilities of film music. Rather than focusing on the specific location of film music with respect to the diegesis and accepting a broader, generalized approach that film music is participating in narrative articulation, analytical methodology incorporating and expanding beyond literary theory and musicology can be promoted as a potential avenue of analysis, revealing the interaction of musical and narrative processes and developments. Such an approach shifts analysis towards the compositional procedures within the music itself, rather than music's functional role in the film proper and bringing forth distinctions first proposed in the 1940s.

Forging a path for filmusic

Trends concerning film music analysis have focused on three primary issues: symmetry between musical and visual events (either running parallel or counterpoint to each other), the locus of the musical source with respect to the filmic experience and/or the narrative, and the narrative connotations generated by the musical score. Many of these approaches preserve a disparity between form and function, and the terminological conflicts created by their interlinked, umbrella-term approach drawn from literary theory has created a divide with respect to these roles and their

[26] The "Five Binaries" are summarized from Neumeyer's chart presented in Ibid. 63.

relationship to the more significant visual medium. In 1980 musicologist Helga de la Motte-Haber proposed a Germanic distinction between the two concepts, with *Film-Musik* (or "filmmusic") referring to the functional role which has dominated discourse, and *Filmmusik* (or "filmusic") defining the compositional techniques associated with the genre.[27]

When discussing musical aspects of narrative associations with respect to compositional techniques, especially with Elfman's oeuvre, the preference has centered heavily on elements of musical *color*, identified as an—if not the—essential component of the musical soundtrack. As described by Robert Nelson in 1946, musical color is utilized "to represent the sensuous or exotic side of music" and stands in stark opposition to the notion of musical *line*, which is the "intellectual side" of music relating to the construction and manipulation of musical processes.[28] Musical color provides a more appealing avenue of analysis for a significantly larger audience (in terms of both analysts and readers) for a variety of reasons, including a sense of immediacy (recognition of elements by the viewer), facility, associativity, comprehension (both for scholars and the untrained public audience), and unobtrusiveness.[29] This preliminary division of musical elements as early as the 1940s helped establish a critical separation in two key areas of film music study: predilection to favor particular musical qualities and subordination of musical content to filmic—visual—events. Moreover, elements of musical line can be manipulated in deference to favoring color, such as establishing setting through scales or rhythms, but this too can be minimal compared to the preference for timbre. In particular, the use of harmony presents a unique situation for such analytical discussions; static harmonic elements, either as individual chords (especially through the use of dissonance to create tension) or extended pedal points (either single or multiple pitches) can add to the overall effect of the musical color. When harmony progresses and incorporates a temporal element requiring a duration to *develop* its significance (as opposed to an instantaneous demarcation of its role), its coloristic effects may still

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[27] See William H. Rosar, "Film Music—What's in a Name?" in *The Journal of Film Music*, 1, 1 (2002), 14.

[28] Robert U. Nelson, "Film Music: Color or Line?," *Hollywood Quarterly*, *2*, 1 (1946), 57.

[29] Ibid. 57.

persist, but a vertical aspect of line is also enacted. Musical line, much like the idea of filmusic, becomes considerably more restrictive, especially because of its considerable unrelatability for a larger audience and limited capacity as functional to what has been considered a primarily visual medium.

Likewise, issues of film music and its relationship to the diegesis stem largely from Claudia Gorbman's study, where the emphasis of music's role is suppressed by the daunting presence of the narrative articulated by the film proper. The notion of the diegetic/nondiegetic divide and the locus of music in relation to this dichotomy stems from film studies and literary theory, retroactively applying terminology from an external field into musical discourse. Such use of terminology drawn from fields outside of music is not new, but this practice has frequently governed prevailing discussions of film music as a whole.

For some, the separation of audio from the visual in any capacity remains an impossible, if not altogether detrimental, hurdle which the field cannot cross. Because of the active engagement of the filmgoer to the visual and narrative events, music is utilized as part of an overall amalgamation, rather than a standalone element. Gorbman refutes the notion of equality between music of the concert hall and music for film, stating, "To judge film music as we judge 'pure' music is to ignore its status as a part of the collaboration that is the film. Ultimately it is the narrative context, the *interrelations* between music and the rest of the film's system, that determine the effectiveness of film music."[30] David Neumeyer argues that referential ties to narrative prohibit interpretations of music in a larger context, with respect to both its unfolding within the film (as a musicocentric entity, analogous to "traditional" theories and interpretations of music) as well as its interconnectivity with film itself:

> [N]arrative reference impedes or slows down the diachronic flow of music in time. Music that is "stuck" to organized meaning pays homage to the vococentric nature of cinema. The more music participates in supporting, advancing, or commenting on narrative, the more it loses the integrity of its diachronic flow. . . . One must try not to exaggerate music's role, try not to reinstate the old mysteries and powers . . . Claiming film music for a discipline by constructing interpretations of implicit meanings grounded in the idea that music is "equal" to the image, or "agential," will only work if one also

[30] Gorbman, "Narrative Film Music," 184, emphasis in original.

> acknowledges the limitations of the contexts in which such claims can be made, or, to put it another way, if one acknowledges the limitations imposed by an inevitably distorted mode of viewing and hearing a film. . . . [O]ur priority should be music *in* film, not music *for* film.[31]

By elevating the status of music through its role in the articulation of narrative, discussions of film music *qua* music have recently emerged.[32] Kathryn Kalinak proposes the identification of music as its own entity as the initial stage: "[F]ilm music is a part of a dual discourse which incorporates both an aural and a visual component. The first step in an analysis of film music is to hear it as music; then it becomes necessary to analyze it as part of a larger construct, that is, to analyze film music in conjunction within the image and the sound track it accompanies."[33] Kalinak further notes that "film music is, above all, music, and coming to terms with the filmic experience as a musical experience is the first step in understanding how a film's score wields power over us."[34] Additionally, the separation from the restricted position of part of the (subservient) audio track and to a more prominent role as a distinct entity which contributes to the overall filmic *narrative* (rather than the filmic experience) unites studies of film music with its commonly-cited historical antecedents: nineteenth-century programmatic music. Such an alignment further permits the identification of apropos methodology and analytical tools to utilize when approaching film music *qua* music.

Yet the issue of cinematic narrativity in contrast to literary levels of articulating narrative—the foundation upon which Gorbman's diegetic/nondiegetic spaces are built—highlight the disparity between film music and potential analyses of *filmusic*. Rather than incorporating the definitions of diegetic spaces from Gennette's literary theories and Étienne Souriau's filmic analyses, Ben Winters

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[31] Neumeyer, *Meaning and Interpretation*, 13.

[32] Recent analyses and discussions which focus specifically on melodic, harmonic, and metric elements of film music are presented within their respective chapters.

[33] Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 14.

[34] Ibid. 4.

shifts towards semiotician Christian Metz, whose definition of diegesis resides in the entirety of *filmic space*—not simply the narrative, but the time and space encompassed by the narrative, including setting/landscape, events, and characters. By identifying the diegesis as consisting of the filmic space instead of the location of its narrativizing voice, Binns argues that "nondiegetic" music is *denotative* in nature—one of the primary criticisms for film music by Adorno and Eisler sixty years prior.[35]

By redefining the "location" of music with respect to the newly-delineated narrative space within the filmic universe, Winters highlights one of the critical issues of film study: the apparent necessity to consider filmic viewing as a realistic experience. The construction of a "filmic reality" by the filmgoer to develop interpretations and meanings of the visual events does not necessarily entail the direct correlation to the physical reality in which the filmgoer exists; this separation permits formerly nondiegetic music—an impossibility of the "real" world—to be contained within the filmic (narrative) space of the film itself, regardless of the degree of recognition by either the characters on the screen or the observer outside the film.[36] Moreover, the associativity generated by musical events (be they coloristic or formalistic in nature) remains paired in the recall of a film (and, by proxy, narrative space) by the observer, linking music with film regardless of its narrativizing voice. Winters summarizes, "Whether or not we recall it accurately, we are aware that it should be there, and this seems to suggest that music normally belongs (in our imagination) to the same diegetic realm as the characters: it is part of the story's world, not an invisible means by which the story is narrated."[37]

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[35] Ben Winters, "The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music & Letters*, 91, 2 (May 2010), 226-27. Also noteworthy of this appropriation of literary terminology is the tendency of film musicology, not just film theory, to incorporate the terms from the outside field. By doing so, Winters suggests that such subversion comes "at the expense of its original use in film studies" (225).

[36] Winters does not require fiction or fantasy as a necessary requirement for such a separation to take place; historical films such as *Apollo 13* (1995), despite the potential for real-world connectivity, still exist in a fictional space beyond the filmgoer. Winters concludes, "We may accept the presence of music in the narrative space of the film, then, partly as a sign of the fictional state of the world created by the screen. It is an indicator that the universe in which the events we are watching takes place is not real; and having accepted that, music's presence seems entirely natural, rather than a troubling element that needs to be assigned to a separate level of narrative" (Ibid. 229).

[37] Ibid. 230. Winters continues to draw parallels to concepts of literary theory and its relation to film, particularly the division between *fabula* and *syuzhet* (the aural and visual components contained within the film). When constructing a *fabula*

Winters's proposition for analysis, then, centers on narrative space for the identification of sonic elements and not the association that the characters within or interpreter beyond, generating three distinct "levels" (spatial denotations) for the sound track, particularly as it relates to the *fabula* (the structuring of a narrative created by the filmgoer):

> [T]he extra-diegetic might be understood as music or sound whose logic is not dictated by events within the narrative space, and therefore does not seem to be part of the film's *fabula*. . . . [I]ntra-diegetic music or sound exists in the film's everyday narrative space and time, and is thus properly thought of as part of the film's *fabula*: it may be considered to be produced by the characters themselves (either as a result of their physical movements, as with mickey-mousing, as an expression of their emotional state, or as a musical calling card), or by the geographical space of the film . . . Finally, music that is heard by the characters 'as music' in the diegesis (much like phenomenal song in opera), along with sounds that the characters seem to hear, retains its level of 'diegetic' for continuity's sake.[38]

Winters's alternative methodology concerning the location of diegesis encompasses one of the critical complications implicit in film music analysis: terminological conflict. Such issues are generated from the application of terminology across a range of disparate fields, including both film and literary theories, to a topic in which a uniform, consistent language persists. William Rosar's tracing of the lexicography of the term "film music" reveals a sharp dichotomy between the usage of the term from an applicative and a philosophical point of view: "The *essence* of film music came to be thought of as a compositional technique, or style in the broadest sense, rather than the use to which it was put in films, its *function*."[39] Much like programmatic or theater music, this difference in terminology suggests a significant shift away from music as acquiescent to the filmic source and to music as inspired by the filmic events unfolding before the filmgoer. Moreover, the concept of "background music" and

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of the film post-viewing, one still typically retains music in some capacity as a critical component; thematic cues of film scores, such as music from the *Star Wars* series (both the main theme and the association of Darth Vader with "The Imperial March") as well as the chromatic motif in *Jaws* (1975), remain deeply entrenched in the filmic space of both narratives outside of viewing (231). The concepts of *fabula* and *syuzhet* within the relationship of the film-world will be explored further.

[38] Ibid. 237.

[39] Rosar, "Film Music—What's in a Name," 3.

"underscoring" which permeated analytical discourse and drove the subversion of music to filmic events (thus, the film-viewing experience) comes from the film industry, where it was considered below both dialogue and sound effects in the complete sound track.

From this terminological shift comes the notion that "film music"—influence of mood or drama (an effect of the narrative upon the filmgoer)—is a component, but not the defining characteristic, of the art, particularly when the focal point is on compositional processes.[40] This functional definition/condition of film music echoes Germanic traditions of the 1920s, where the application of music in film was originally viewed as *Gebrauchsmusik*—a concept transplanted by the German-trained, prolific Hollywood composer Heinz Roemheld.[41] By restricting the viewpoint of music to its service of its film, Rosar suggests that a myopic view is generated, much as film analysis can be viewed from similar restrictive lenses: "[T]he more general functional definition of film music and the viewpoint it represents might succinctly be called 'film from the perspective of music,' much in the same way that films are examined from the standpoint of screenwriting, or acting, or direction, or cinematography—that is, from the standpoint of the specific contribution of an art or craft to a film."[42]

Binns's notion of a film as an autonomous object draws heavily from Daniel Frampton's *Filmosophy*, establishing a new methodology for analysis, and the concepts of Frampton's philosophical approach dovetail with the divide between film music and *filmusic*. As Frampton summarizes, the

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[40] Rosar draws from definitions presented unintentionally by K. J. Donnelly, whose determination of the inclusion of pop music in "breaking down the film music paradigm" presents a similar divide between essential (compositional) and functional (service of music to film) roles. Such a separation is paralleled to notions of "form vs. function" of architecture and plastic arts. See Ibid. 10-11.

[41] Rosar summarizes Roemheld's early beliefs on the role of underscoring: "[Roemheld] did not value underscoring *qua* music because traditional notions of musical form were invariably compromised or abandoned altogether in composing to film action, and development in the symphonic sense was almost impossible for the same reason" (13). Rosar also stresses that the limitation of the expansion of musical form is not only limited by filmic needs, but also the nature espoused by proponents of *Gebrauchsmusik*, in which the utility takes command for music ultimately to provide service.

[42] Ibid. 14.

cognitivist/constructivist approach so heavily favored in previous interpretations of film, as well as the mimetic connection between film and filmgoer that has served as a critical defining boundary for analysis, deal solely with interaction, but omits *creation* as a critical component in the filmic process. Moreover, the process of narration, coming from a narrative voice, is selective and restrictive in nature and fails to yield the totality of the filmic entity. As Frampton summarizes, "Narrators are also said to give us select portions of the world—but it is nonsensical to say there is a world which we are given *portions* of, because we do not see any other world than the film-world presented. The filmgoer has no choice—there is only one film-world, one sequence of images."[43] Similarly, the narrator, regardless of location in the narrative process, is involved in the presentation and direction, but not necessarily the fabrication, of the film-world before the spectator.[44] It is in this separate film-world that the content of both the *fabula* and *syuzhet* (the aural and visual components contained within a film) is created, regardless of narrative voice. This separate "film-world" cannot be linked to the human (filmgoer) world—both in terms of content and experience. As Frampton summarizes, "Film-being is not human, and the film-world is not real. Film is its own reality, its own world, and the *attention* of any possible, conceptual film-being must be theorised as being part of that world, not separate and observational."[45] Additionally, as Frampton notes, "Film cannot show us human thinking, it shows us 'film-thinking.' Film is not a human-like mind, it is, uniquely, a 'filmind.'[46]

Ultimately, Frampton's approach of "filmosophy" elevates the role of the film through this concept of the filmind. Rather than considering viewing a film as a (predetermined) message, articulated by narrator(s) and sent to a receiver for interpretation, a separate *distinct* entity determines

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[43] Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower, 2006), 35-36.

[44] Frampton is highly critical of the narrative-centric approach for its tendency to segment elements of the film, especially for the emotional disconnect created in the experience. Frampton suggests, "Considering a film via the concept of narration, filmgoers may well just see a sequence of actions and events, rather than a whole of image and sound and drama. This literary heritage also disallows it from truly being able to handle poetic and emotional imagery" (112).

[45] Ibid. 46, emphasis in original.

[46] Ibid. 47.

what to present through an action of deliberate "thought." As Frampton defines, "The filmind controls the time and space of the film-world, and understanding the concept of a 'filmind' allows the filmgoer some organisational comprehension over the film as a whole. It controls the narrative and any narrators, but also importantly designs the images and sounds of the film-world."[47] Thus what is presented to the audience is an active selection of what and how the film "wants" the filmgoer to see, and not the totality of the individual universe in which the film is taking place. The manner in which a film "thinks" through its filmind—through such techniques as framing, focus, color, speed, sound, image, movement, and shifts—permits a film to create and establish elements of its unique individuality, as well as symmetry and divergence in techniques across other films. Likewise, the filmind conceives of these methods independently as well as *en totum*, manipulating at will—*as the filmind deems appropriate*—its (separate) world which it is presenting to the filmgoer. For Frampton, "[e]ach film is unique then, with its own filmind steering the film-world. These unique filminds are also *autonomous* and free to create or think anything they wish."[48] Thus, the filmind assumes a role which any narrator cannot: creator, rather than simply presenter. Moreover, the filmind serves to create the (limited) visual presentation before the filmgoer as well as, more importantly, the entirety of the film-world in which the film is taking place. Frampton summarizes, "The filmind is active and ethical, and makes its own limits—every film has its own world . . . The concept of the filmind is therefore not intended as a replacement for the concept of narrative, it only points up the lack in theories of 'narration,' and the limits of the idea of 'the narrator.'"[49]

Because the filmind is an active participant in the filmic experience, and the contents of the film-world are governed by this autonomous object rather than a predetermined message to be interpreted by a viewer through independent and cultural schemata, any analysis of such elements must account for the equal participation from the film and from the filmgoer. Music is identified and recalled by the filmgoer; music *also* participates in the events of the narrative within the film regardless

[47] Ibid. 114.

[48] Ibid. 83, emphasis in original.

[49] Ibid. 113.

of the awareness of those within the film world. Because of this capacity, filmusic has a crucial component that permits greater flexibility and plausibility in analytical interpretations: "Musical time" unfolds in "filmic time," as well as actual time.

One of the greatest detriments to the concept of film music as a unique entity is its "need" to relate to the visual events before the audience. This relation, however, requires a necessary condition through two essential elements to be truly viable: recognition through repetition and recall. This mandate creates a predicament in film music analysis in that aural recognition and recall require time to unfold in some capacity to establish some sort of connection. Additionally, the immediacy of aural recognition is considerably inferior to visual recognition, especially in a medium where visual cues take prominence. Thus, visual cues and associations tend to take a primary role for narrativizing, with music assuming a secondary support. By separating filmic space from filmic experience, however, the need to relate the aural to the visual becomes less a requirement and more arbitrary, for the diegesis (that which serves the driving force behind the existence of associativity) continues to exist independent of the congruence/dissonance between sight and sound. Identification, either instantaneous or retrospective in analysis, is not a precondition for the plausibility of associativity. Undoubtedly, it acts as an important consideration for the validity of such analyses, but it does not confirm or deny interpretations.

Beyond simply liberating film music from the viewing experience, however, it permits elements of line to serve a narratological role in the diegesis contained within filmic space. Such potential has been insinuated through the emphasis of leitmotivic analysis of film scores. But melody is only one benefactor of liberating musical time from a film viewing and situating it in an independent space; harmony, rhythm, and meter all profit from allowing musical events to be "perceived" (considered) over a period of time. Moreover, a connective thread can be established *through a narrative* independent of viewing.

The relationship of narrative to Elfman's music in his collaborations with Tim Burton remains a significant component of discourse, although many preliminary studies focus on the role of diegetic popular music and its narratological function. Such studies, though exploring the role of film music

and its participation in expressing narrative, typically utilize music not written by Elfman; analyses focusing on Elfman's compositional techniques tend to focus especially on melodic aspects of Elfman's works. The similarity within scores across Burton's filmography, however, initiates the potential for building from the localized concept of a filmworld (contained within a single film) to a "globalized" approach, one which encapsulates multiple films with shared characteristics of narrative content.

Preliminary studies of Elfman's music

The role of Elfman's music in aurally articulating Burton's narrative is commonly employed as a primary inroad for discourse. Overwhelmingly, initial studies involving Elfman's music focus on two central issues: a distinct predilection for certain orchestrations, and the interaction of Elfman's score with "popular" (commercial) music, usually focusing on the typical setting of Elfman's score representing nondiegetic elements of fantasy, while commercial music typically serves as a diegetic representation of the real. Concerning instrumentation, the most commonly cited elements are the use of (low) brass for primary melodic material as well as strident accentuation, often creating an "oom-pah" effect. More characteristic of the overall sound (as opposed to strictly melodic characteristics) is the use of celesta and voices—more specifically, women's and/or children's choir)—creating a timbral palette that emphasizes the gothic and ethereal qualities of the visual images. While the distinct timbres create a trademark aural quality, their relationship to the narrative is also an essential component:

> The celeste [sic] . . . with its pure, music-box, bell-like quality, has come to be associated with memory, mystery, and things not truly of this world. . . . [I]t is firmly established in Elfman's vocabulary, where it often represents characters whose sense of innocence stems from the fact that they are so far removed from our own reality that they are potentially a little frightening. . . . The use of voices, particularly women's and children's voices, has a similar effect. Children's voices are often found in films concerned with dangerous, supernatural, or alien "others." . . . All these films, like *Sleepy Hollow*, have children as important characters and, on one level, the children's voices in the soundtrack are specifically linked to and representative of the children in the narrative. However, in these films, the apparent innocence of the child's voice

> is positioned against the threat implicit in the film's title genre and, by association, the child's voice itself comes to represent that threat, conveying a sense of mystery and immanent evil.[50]

The resulting timbral elements, in conjunction with a predilection for the use of minor keys, settings of melodies and accompanying textures in a lower register, and melodic/harmonic dissonance have lent credence to the generalization of Elfman's scores as "gothic."[51] Odell and Le Blanc echo this sentiment of Elfman and the gothic, noting, "(Elfman's) distinctive music perfectly complements the images on screen—be they manic, ethereal, or haunting. His rhythms can be full of purpose or incredibly complex and his melodies eminently memorable."[52]

This definitive "Elfman sound" has also carried over outside the realm of contemporary Hollywood cinema and into the concert hall in his 2004, six-movement symphony *Serenada Schizophrana*, which incorporates such elements as synthesizers, low-register brass melodies with an "oom-pah" accompaniment ("A Brass Thing"), significant percussion, and a women's chorus and soloist ("I Forget"). Elfman's distinct sound also served as the aural backdrop for Cirque du Soleil's *Iris*, a 2011 Los Angeles stage show blending contemporary circus with historical cinema. His distinctive instrumentation and its defining quality as compositional thumbprint forms the basis of larger, more commercially-oriented discussions of his music in score and album reviews of various trade magazines, as well as his 2016 collection *Rabbit and Rogue*, which provides a collection of pieces in various "styles"—all orchestrated with the typical qualities of his timbral palate—for use in independent media projects of any level.

In addition to the significant focus on instrumentation as the defining characteristic of Elfman's exceptional sound, the location of music with respect to the diegesis has received frequent consideration. As seen in the score for *Batman* (1989), the tendency typically cited for Burton's films (with Elfman's vocal numbers notwithstanding) is to place the newly composed instrumental music

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[50] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 33.

[51] Ibid. 31. Halfyard also makes an argument that melody may also be considered subordinate to the timbral and textural settings of the score.

[52] Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc, *The Pocket Essential Tim Burton* (Harpenden: Oldcastle, 2005), 23

in a nondiegetic, background outside the filmic viewing space, while popular pre-composed works by musicians other than Elfman function diegetically and are often central to the narrative. Halfyard identifies such a use in *Batman*, where music from the commercial soundtrack written and performed by Prince appears as source sounds within the film. An impromptu dinner date between the Joker and Vicki Vale within the art museum is launched with a grand entrance by the Joker and his lackeys, one of whom is carrying a boom box playing Prince's song "Partyman." The song remains strongly foregrounded as the crew redecorates and "improves" the priceless artifacts with additional paint, knives, and other destructive devices. A similar celebratory setting involves the Joker commencing his grand parade in honor of Gotham City's anniversary. Blaring over the speakers on his float is "Trust," echoing the Joker's sentiments of his public challenge to Batman to "take off his makeup" and fight one-on-one and act in true generosity to the Gothamites—a move which the Joker escalates by throwing his own parade complete with a cash drop and extermination of attendees with his trademark Smilex gas. For Halfyard, these two instances establish the divide between the Joker and Batman, for no diegetic source music is ever attached to the caped crusader: "[B]oth . . . center on the Joker in pursuit of his destructive and homicidal art, clearly establishing Prince and his songs as belonging to the Joker's musical identity. . . . They are also clearly woven into the narrative: in 'Partyman,' the lyrics refer to the colors red and green, the same colors being used by the Joker to 'improve the paintings;' while in the festival parade scene, as Prince's song 'Trust' finishes, the Joker asks the crowd 'who do you trust?'"[53]

K. J. Donnelly further explores the interconnectivity of Elfman's score with tradition of the Golden Age of Cinema, particularly Max Steiner and the use of leitmotiv, in the face of post-modern Hollywood film. While Elfman's music provides characteristic themes previously identified in Halfyard's analysis of the Bat-theme and Love theme, which is significant in tying in the extended narrative world created by the soundtrack LP, Donnelly is far more critical of the lack of interaction

[53] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 78.

between Elfman's score and the visuals of the film. Donnelly summarizes this disparity between narrative connectivity and visual synchronicity:

> At times (Elfman's orchestral score) is obscured by sound effects rather than taking them into account, and the internal musical logic of many pieces outweighs their logic in the filmic environment, For example, when Joker first sees a picture of Vicki Vale, the refrain of 'Beautiful Dreamer' appears, and dialogue continues, the music lacking any direct interface with the action. At this point, the music does not bow to the image track through matching the momentary dynamics of the action; rather its time scheme carries on regardless of the film. Much in the same way that pop songs often have in films, the music here retains its own full integrity rather than being forced to bend itself to fit the actions. [54]

The use of Steiner's leitmotiv technique in addition to Korngold's extensive scoring, reaching 110 instrumentalists in the orchestra, is paired with melodramatic Gothic visuals to create a grand parody of the classical models. The unwillingness to bend to form and tendency to overexaggerate hyperbolic clichés of music coding, such as overbearing leitmotivic references and nineteenth-century Wagnerian orchestration and harmony, suggest to Donnelly that positioning the score in such a manner is intentional. He summarizes, "Both music and set design situate the film in what seems to be an alternative present, one projected to now form a 1940s past. . . . Elfman's music, then, seems to be a future version of the Classical Hollywood film score, but one that has followed a different and more direct line of development."[55]

Such settings of nondiegetic score with (or against) diegetic popular (pre-existing) music have served critical roles in other Burton/Elfman pairings. One such positioning includes *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), where the conflict of narrativity location serves to create a literal separation of spaces within the diegesis—the titular character and his fantastic "world" in the castle on top of the hill, and the "reality" of idyllic Suburbia in the valley below—as well as a metaphorical separation between the quintessential Burtonian "Outsider" and the new world and its "real" inhabitants. The

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[54] K. J. Donnelly, "The Classical Film Score Forever? *Batman*, *Batman Returns*, and Post-classical Film Music," in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (New York: Routledge, 1998), 146.

[55] Ibid. 151.

opening title sequence features numerous images depicting the Inventor (portrayed by Vincent Price) and his creations/machinery, concluding with a long shot of the castle—all set to the trademark Elfman sound with celesta and women's choir, accompanied by strings. The next occurrence of nondiegetic score following these opening titles and narration, which unfolds as the camera continues to zoom out and into a small home set below the castle, appears when local Avon lady Peg Boggs (Dianne Wiest), determined to make a sale, adjusts her car mirror and captures the bastion in its reflection, literally mirroring the physical and metaphorical distance between the townspeople and the inhabitants of this distant realm.[56] It is through this strict pairing from the outset that spatial identities are initially established; as Alexander Binns summarizes, "[N]on-diegetic music is initially associated with Edward's world in the castle but it is not present when he moves to the suburb, whose identity . . . is constructed musically through the use of diegetic, popular music."[57] This diegetic music (generally performed in this film by Tom Jones) facilitates the shift from subjective reflections and psychological readings of Edward and into a more objective, spatially defined view of the townspeople. Binns further characterizes this divide as well as its relation to the filmic fantasy genre as a whole:

> *Edward Scissorhands* maintains this (separation) by musically dividing the 'real' world, with its obtainable—read, 'desirable'—attributes from the fantastic, with its innocent, misunderstood and withdrawn identities. It is not only presented as innocent but is also constructed as both threatening and threatened, and it is here that music participates in refining the audience's ideological identification within these categories and their associations. Indeed, the music helps to forge some of the associations such as the ways in which Edward's identity is always only marginally assimilated into the suburban narrative and to highlight moments of incongruity.[58]

The interaction of the written score with prerecorded music converges with Elfman's orchestration/timbral techniques to produce an additional level to the visual narrative of *Mars Attacks!*

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[56] Alexander G. Binns, "Music and Fantasy Types in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*," in *The Music of the Fantasy Cinema*, ed. Janet Halfyard (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2014), 134.

[57] Ibid. 142.

[58] Ibid. 140.

(1996), Burton's homage to 1950s science fiction cinema. Fairly devoid of characteristic leitmotiv techniques previously utilized in the six prior Burton pairings, Elfman's music, highly influenced by Bernard Herrmann's *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), brings the theremin to the fore (in conjunction with the trademark choral settings) for both "primary melodic lines" (though lacking characteristic development) and synthesizer samples which were integrated into the final score.[59] The distinctive Martian sound becomes less a character sketch/depiction and more akin to a temporal recall of the lampooned era and genre. Philip Hayward summarizes, "The Martian's refrain(s), territorialisations and deterritorialisms are signified in the (extra-diegetical) musical score and, specifically, in the theremin themes. These work off an identifiable tradition, laden with the affect and significance . . . clearly understood as aurally emblematic of alienness.[60]

Elfman's contemporary setting of mid-twentieth-century science fiction timbres is paired with Slim Whitman's "Indian Love Call" (1955), which serves as mankind's ultimate defense against the Martian invaders. Whitman's style also parallels the eeriness generated by Elfman's instrumentation through a technique described as "shooting arrows," in which pitches typically performed by the steel guitar tend to slide uncontrollably upwards. What is critical about this song, however, is not its timbre but rather its date of composition: unlike the score, written during the mid-1990s (harkening backwards four decades), Whitman's "Indian Love Call" is a literal token representing humanity of the reflected era (in this case, *acting forwards* four decades). When confronted with this volatile weapon from the past, the alien outsiders are challenged with a territorial claim by mankind on a literal and temporal front, establishing a space belonging to the "genuine relic" of the 1950s, as opposed to the similar—but nevertheless alien—menace. The discovery of the song's apocalyptic capabilities, a fortuitous accident, parallels sociocultural practices foreign to the setting; a young outcast man (Ritchie) rushes to a nursing home to save his grandma (a more literal outcast from their otherwise tight-knit American family) from the approaching alien onslaught. Upon reaching her room, where

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[59] The *ondes martenot* also makes an appearance in the film score, adding to the temporal narrative articulated through instrumentation.

[60] Philip Hayward, "Inter-planetary Soundclash: Music, Technology, and Territorialisation in *Mars Attacks!*" *Off the Planet: Music, Sound, and Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Philip Hayward (Bloomington: IUP, 2004), 184.

she is peacefully listening to her music through headphones and blissfully unaware of the gigantic laser situated behind her, Ritchie calls out to her to gain her attention. Hearing his voice, the elderly woman turns, accidently pulling the headphones cable out of the radio and exposing all in the room to the song—just as Slim Whitman's voice freely ascends into the falsetto range and mirrors his trademark "shooting arrows" technique:

> In the moment of the violation of the woman's private space, the uninvited disruption of her communion with a specific sound and sound text, the film does not simply present us with an invented absurdity, it *resonates*-loops back to various (pre-Christian) cultural practices of sound and sonic association. Most particularly, the sequence invites comparison to those Papua New Guinean societies for whom certain sounds are sacred to particular groups. In these contexts, it is taboo for outsiders to simply hear the sounds of ritual instruments (such as ritual bullroarers), or particular chants. What is notable in *Mars Attacks!* Is that Burton does not attempt to provide us with any 'ancient' and/or (conventionally) holy sound to symbolize essential humanity but, rather, uses sounds plucked from the era and cultural context from which he derives his inspiration.[61]

Hayward concludes, "(The Martians) are 'outweirded' by a sonic spatiality premised on a cultural inner-space—the virtual spatiality of the mix—that is more powerful in its condensation of odd, intense, human and—arguably, *above all*—specifically *white North American* subjectivity than the malice of Outer Space embodied by the Martian hordes.[62] Significant in *Mars Attacks!* as well as *Edward Scissorhands* is the importance of the narrative divide of spaces, such as the separation between elements of fantasy and reality. Much work in this field has utilized popular music (in a diegetic setting) not composed by Elfman, and these are but two examples.

Building from previous studies in diegetic "Burtonian" music usage

The use of diegetic popular music as a means of separating the realms of fantasy and reality has antecedents prior to its incorporation in *Edward Scissorhands*, and the tradition continues well after this film. Moreover, the significance of text in relation to the diegesis, discussed at length by Halfyard in

[61] Ibid. 180, emphasis in original.

[62] Ibid. 183, emphasis in original.

her analysis of *Batman*, remains a critical component to the narrative. Particularly in the early original collaborations, diegetic commercial music served as a link between the two realms, allowing the fantastic to bridge the gap and reach the real, interacting with characters and elements in ways that typically produced comical results and severe narrative consequences.

The first notable example appears in Burton's premiere feature length film, *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*. The titular character, a quintessential example of a *puer aeternus*, arrives at the Apache Bar, having recovered from a concussion. Dejected at the realization that his bike is not in the basement of the Alamo (the location provided to him by the psychic), Pee-Wee attempts to use the public phone advertised outside the bar—completely unaware that the tavern is exclusively attended by the biker gang "Satan's Helpers." After shushing the raucous group, his phone call is abruptly cut short and he is forced to leave. Upon exiting, however, Pee-Wee "inadvertently" knocks over a row of motorcycles, prompting the gang to seize him and discuss their violent plans for retribution. Asking for one last request before his impending death at the hands of the unruly mob, Pee Wee borrows a pair of shoes from the bus boy and begins dancing throughout the bar to the song "Tequila," by The Champs.

This dance sequence, though highly comical in nature, serves as a critical juncture for the character and his link to the "outside world," particularly with respect to the great dichotomy between his mental and physical age. Pee-Wee embodies the role of foreigner/outsider with the typical world due to his child-like mind and awkward appearance, and this is augmented by the setting of the rough and rugged biker bar in the middle of the desolate land. Moreover, this contrast is further emphasized visually in attire, where Pee-Wee's signature wardrobe of a grey glen plaid suit and red bow tie sharply clashes with the dark denim and black leather of the biker gang. The literal dancing shoes borrowed from the bus boy only amplifies his narrative separation from the real world, as the white leather platform shoes are both anachronistic and spatially detached from his current surroundings (more commonly linked to a 1970s urban discotheque). The distance in mental age is subtly intimated through the weathered appearance and abundance of facial hair sported by the overwhelming majority of the bikers—considerably different from the clear, clean, baby face appearance of the protagonist.

The awkwardness of his dancing style provides a visual reminder of his narrative disconnect, and the song selection provides a simultaneous aural separation. The title—as well as the only lyrics of the song—centers on alcohol, a defining cultural barrier between adolescence and "fully developed" adulthood. Additionally, Pee-Wee's impromptu dance session remains greatly ineffective until he jumps on top of the bar and begins smashing several bottles and pitchers of beer while continuing to dance between multiple neon signs advertising a great variety of beer brands. Pee-Wee's pun of "break-dancing" and child-like destruction of objects (mirroring the actions of his adversary Francis earlier in the film, who displays similar juvenile behavior while playing with bath toys) facilitates the breaking down of the social/behavioral/temporal barriers between him and the bikers through violence (an acceptable alternative to the threats lobbed at Pee-Wee only minutes prior). As Pee-Wee and the bikers exit the bar together, Pee-Wee appears with a new black vest from the gang, confirming his acceptance into the group; their discussions while walking towards the row of motorcycles center entirely on the shared bond between the two: the undying love and unbreakable attachment to their bikes. In the ultimate symbol of acceptance, Pee-Wee is granted the use of a sacred token—in this case, another biker's motorcycle—to aid him in his quest. The close of the scene reminds the audience and, indirectly, the gang that Pee-Wee is still truly a child at heart and mind, as his efforts to ride off into the sunset are dashed mere seconds from his departure, crashing into the bar's wooden advertisement. This trauma and subsequent trip to the emergency room brings about another adolescent nightmare involving the destruction of his bike—this time involving diabolic clowns operating unsuccessfully on his prized possession before sending it to be liquefied in a vat—under the auspicious eye of the Devil appearing as his nemesis Francis in costume.

While *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* utilizes a song as means to separate the fantasy/child from the real/adult narrative spaces, *Beetlejuice* uses multiple examples from a single artist to display the interaction between the worlds of the deceased and the living. In a precursor to the aforementioned method for the music of Tom Jones in *Edward Scissorhands*, the music of Harry Belafonte comes to serve as the token voice through which the narrative realms and the filmic space of the diegetic/nondiegetic spans the fantastical gap. The first use of a Belafonte reference, however, *inverts*

the process, appearing as a nondiegetic element during the opening title sequence. To further distance itself from the typical uses of nondiegetic popular music which permeated Burton/Elfman collaborations, the second line from "Day-O" ("The Banana Boat Song"), "Daylight come and me wan' go home," is performed by Elfman rather than Belafonte, heavily manipulated through the use of reverb and pitch bending over Elfman's composed score. This brief allusion to Belafonte's work not only serves as a foreshadowing for subsequent appearances of Belafonte's original music, but also, and more significantly, as an intrusion by the realm of the deceased into the dominion of the living and simultaneously foreshadowing the impending demise of protagonists Adam and Barbara Maitland. The Afterlife beckons the couple, who become the primary conduit through which the two worlds intersect; the non-established existence of the fully functional, highly regulated postmortem society, however, prohibits the allusion from manifesting in its typical usage in other Burton films. Thus, the fantastic does not mingle or unite with the real, but instead intrudes briefly to claim its newest constituents.

In their first attempt to terrify the occupants of their home (the Deetz family, specifically the adults Charles and Delia), the Maitlands attempt to possess the family and their guests during a dinner party. As the Deetz's discuss their child's (Lydia) fascination with the potential ghosts in their new home, Charles and Delia attempt to divert the conversation and advocate impossibility at the unfathomable idea of ghosts living in their newly renovated domicile, implying it is simply her childish imagination running wild. When Delia's interior designer Otho, the man responsible for removing all physical elements of the deceased Maitlands, begins pressing for more information concerning the specters, Delia obstinately refuses to allow the conversation to continue, demanding to focus on a new topic. When preparing to discuss her sculpture, however, she becomes possessed and begins singing "Day-O"—in the original voice/recording of Harry Belafonte. As Delia remains unable to control her voice and spastic actions much to her confusion and consternation, Charles too becomes possessed, jerking uncontrollably and rising from the dinner table. Soon, the entire dinner party is overcome by their unseen supernatural visitors, dancing and singing around the table and torn between exultation and bewilderment at their current actions. Upon sitting down at the table, the guests are

attacked by the shrimp cocktails directly in front of each of them, forming monstrous hands which mimic the "deadly black tarantula" from the preceding lyric and throwing them backwards and away from the table.

Much like the use of "Tequila" and the significance of a single word, this particular scene hinges on the connotation of "home" on multiple physical and metaphorical levels. As previously mentioned, the deceased Maitlands are technically considered denizens of the Netherworld (Burton's literal space for the dead), a highly organized bureaucracy whose due process requires the couple to scare away the living to reclaim their home. Though aware of their demise, they have failed to accept their deaths and fully cross over to the afterlife, though they desire to remain in their physical house and in the land of the living. Adding to the irony of the situation is the Maitland's self-imposed entrapment in the attic—a spatial metaphor for their spirits residing in Heaven. The song, with its direct recall of the opening Elfman line, centers on the Maitland's desire to return home—with respect to both their country home and Life itself. Their plan, however, ultimately fails, as the Deetzes and their company discuss ways in which to capitalize on the undeniable existence of ghosts in the residence.

The final scenes of the film bring about another Belafonte staple, "Jump in the Line," and again tap in to the real/fantasy divide. The Maitlands, having saved the Deetzes from the maniacal poltergeist Betelgeuse both in terms of physical harm and prolonged suffering as they successfully stop the wedding ceremony between him and Lydia, have become fully accepted into their home and reach an amicable agreement to cohabitate. Moreover, the Maitlands, having never had children, have become the surrogate loving parents for Lydia, who has always been disconnected from her birth parents. Charles finds his solace in the silence and tranquility of the countryside and Delia her inspiration for her sculptures in the appearances of Betelgeuse—all while still independent and disconnected from Lydia and each other.[63] To celebrate Lydia's success on a recent math test, Adam

[63] Though never explicitly stated in the dialogue, the opening sequences strongly imply that this has been a difficult situation for the Maitlands. When a realtor, who appears to be friends with Barbara, mentions that the home is far too big for a couple and would be more suited for a "full family," a distinct hurt and sadness crosses over Barbara's face, suggesting possible failed attempts to have children.

and Barbara use their ghostly abilities to conjure a lively Latin number in which Lydia and the Maitlands can dance, accompanied by once-inanimate objects (such as clocks, luggage, and lamps) coming to life to provide both musical accompaniment and atmosphere. Lydia's celebration echoes throughout the house, and her revelry is joined by various (deceased) members of a high school football team, forming a literal dancing line behind her as she ascends into the air and continues to dance off of the ground.

More significant than the "real" use of this song with Lydia participating of her free will in the living world, however, is the transition to the Netherworld, paired with the considerable fade of the song into the background. Betelgeuse is revealed in the waiting room of the Afterlife, interacting with the various individuals surrounding him. Seeing the considerably slow progress of the office (with 9,998,383,749,997 more souls to be processed before his turn), Betelgeuse attempts to bypass his wait by switching numbers with a witch doctor—a move that is clearly noticed and punished by the witch doctor shrinking his head. Throughout this brief scene, Belafonte's song remains present though greatly subdued in the background, with an initial pan out from a speaker in the waiting room suggesting a possible source for both this sound and the stereotypical waiting room music. Betelgeuse, who has spent the entirety of the film attempting to escape the Netherworld and become a part of the living, has been forced back into the bureaucracy, becoming once more a rank-and-file member of the nonliving society. Yet again, the literal and metaphorical collide, but the dramatic shift from interacting with the characters (bridging the fantastic gap and showing the interaction of the two realms) to strictly background keeps the music in this scene (and, thus, Betelgeuse) trapped in the fantastic. He is unable to respond to the goings-on previously identified with the song in the Deetz/Maitland home, thus unable to interact with the living and returning him solely to the Netherworld.

This separation of Elfman underscore and diegetic popular music is evident not only in original Burton narratives, but also in works whose source material comes from other previously established works (a la *Batman*). The recent film *Dark Shadows* (2012) incorporates popular music (particularly of the era) to emphasize the separation of Barnabas Collins from the "real" world of the 1970s and his often unsuccessful integration into the new culture. An opening monologue from the

protagonist details the rise and fall of the Collins family in America during the late 1700s—all set to Elfman's nondiegetic underscore. The closing scene of this pre-credit opening depicts the burial of the (now undead) Barnabas, transformed into a vampire, and subsequent zoom in to the triumphant smirk of the primary antagonist Angelique, a witch who has cursed Barnabas and all members of his family line. This dissolves into a close-up of Victoria Winters (whose real name is Maggie Evans)—a doppelgänger for Barnabas's true love Josette, who leapt to her death nearly two hundred years prior—observing the idyllic scenery and pondering her future from within her train car. As the camera zooms out, the year (1972) is revealed, and the main titles flash amongst a series of aerial shots depicting the train passing through the vast New England countryside.

This dissolve and opening title sequence is paired with "Nights in White Satin" by The Moody Blues—a song which reached its peak on the US charts in 1972. Though used primarily as a nondiegetic accompaniment for the opening titles, the absence of any character or dialogue (save the initial zoom out and framing shot of Victoria) throughout these initial fifty-eight seconds places the song squarely in the foreground. During this sequence, the song serves as a bridge for both character and time: although Josette is no longer alive (contrary to Barnabas and Angelique, whose immortality has kept them largely "the same"), her physical presence remains intact in the form of Victoria. The music fades into the background as the second verse begins, while Victoria simultaneously continues her trek to Collinsport, hitchhiking with a group of young adults. The brief conversation, which focuses on her reasoning for coming to the area, concludes with Victoria stating she was "called" to the area by "an old friend." The subsiding dialogue gives way to the music as it transitions back to the fore, once again becoming the aural focal point just in time for the chorus: " 'Cause I love you/Yes, I love you/Oh, how I love you." The chorus and its subsequent repetition occurs throughout various establishing shots throughout the small fishing town, ultimately fading away as the camera zooms out to reveal her arrival at her destination. Victoria/Josette has finally returned "home," called by her (unknown) lover who has yet to rise from his tomb.

Barnabas's transition to modern society in Collinsport, finding a way to survive both physically and financially, is set to a montage over "Top of the World" by The Carpenters—another 1972 song

which peaked commercially a year later. Visually, this adaptation is emphasized through the abundance of brighter colors (yellow vehicle, white marble interiors, sparkling crystal, white paint over top of dark) and numerous transitions of darkness into light (particularly sunlight, where Barnabas is unable to survive without physical pain) alternating with various reminders of Barnabas's vampiric nature seen in his inability to find comfort at home for sleeping and lack of reflection. His misery ultimately culminates to his interaction with the television—which is showing a performance of The Carpenters. Barnabas, bewildered ("What sorcery is this? Reveal yourself, o' tiny songstress!"), attacks the television, disrupting the feed.

This brief glimpse of Barnabas's original failures to segue into society serves a critical juncture for the diegetic/nondiegetic divide as well as Barnabas's character arc. The sudden shift to a close-up of the television and the singing Karen Carpenter is paired with a dramatic decrease in the volume and quality of sound of the song, mimicking the attributes of the television's audio output. Such a transition foregrounds the song, crossing the fantastical gap and placing the music into diegetic space (both presently and retroactively). Up to this point, Barnabas has failed to integrate into the world around him, and the television—an electronic encapsulation of a living being into a confined space—serves as the barrier through which Barnabas ultimately breaks through to acclimate a new reality. As the montage continues from this point (picking up with the chorus, "I'm on the/Top of the world looking/Down on creation"), Barnabas has ventured further into the world—to interact with Vickie. His success is mirrored with the triumphant rise of his family fishing industry, bringing the family and himself up to the times.

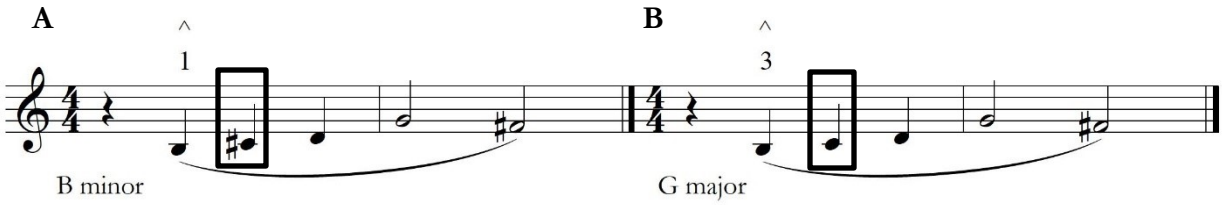
The ultimate union between Barnabas's past and present, linking the fantasy and the real, is achieved through the "happening" at Collinwood, a social event mirroring the immensely popular ball of his 18th century heritage. Headlining the event is Alice Cooper, whose gothic persona facilitates the acceptance of Barnabas (and the Collins family) into the social sphere—though no one other than Barnabas and Elizabeth, the matriarch of the remaining Collins household, is genuinely aware of his true nature. Cooper's first foregrounded song ("No More Mr. Nice Guy") parallels Barnabas's overcoming the emotional grip Angelique. Cooper's second performance ("The Ballad of Dwight

Fry"), however, brings the most direct connection to his past—seen through the life and struggles of Vickie. Echoing the lyrics and content of the song detailing the tragic events of an inmate in an insane asylum, Vickie reveals to Barnabas her true backstory: a young girl abandoned by her parents for being "different" in her ability to see ghosts and sent to a mental asylum. This brush with the supernatural, however, is but a small portion of the reason for her presence; unbeknownst to Barnabas and Vickie, the spirit visiting the young girl is in fact Barnabas's lost love Josette, and it was at her urging that Vickie applies for the governess position at Collinwood. Accepting that they are both sufferers at the hands of the supernatural and are "different" from the world around them, they embrace in a passionate kiss over the chorus ("See my lonely life unfold"), as Cooper's music strongly crescendos to the foreground. This first physical union, however, signals the unfolding of the peripeteia, for Angelique has watched the man who spurned her return to the arms of the wom(e)n he could never fully abandon. While Barnabas and Vickie/Josette have finally become one, Angelique remains alone and unable to claim Barnabas through her physical, sexual, or magical efforts. Unable to cope with the situation and broken emotionally as well as physically, her face literally begins to crack like a china doll. Realizing the futility of her efforts, Angelique begins her methodical destruction of Barnabas and the Collins family once more.

Analytical discussions beyond timbre and location in diegesis

Critical inquiries focusing on "intra-" musical elements of Elfman's scores beyond orchestration, such as harmony, melody, rhythm/meter, and form have appeared very sparingly in both trade magazines and scholarly discourse. Halfyard's analysis of the *Batman* score remains the zenith of such studies, providing a thorough exploration of Elfman's thematic construction and its connections to the overarching narrative. The critical component of Halfyard's reading of the score centers on the identification of the "Bat-theme" (1.1A), the opening motive introduced in the main titles, and its development and variation throughout the score. From this initial motive, a secondary theme is generated by the supposed adjustment of a single pitch (1.1B), mirroring the duality contained within the protagonist and his alter-ego (frequently described as "Bruce/Batman") and presenting the viewer

with a two-sided musical token for physical and psychological identification. The modification, however, has several tonal implications, resulting not only in a change of tonic and mode, but also the initiating scale degree within the tonic triad and the harmonic role of the characteristic perfect fourth leap.



Music Example 1.1. Melodic outlines of "Bat-theme" (A) and "Love theme" (B) from *Batman*.

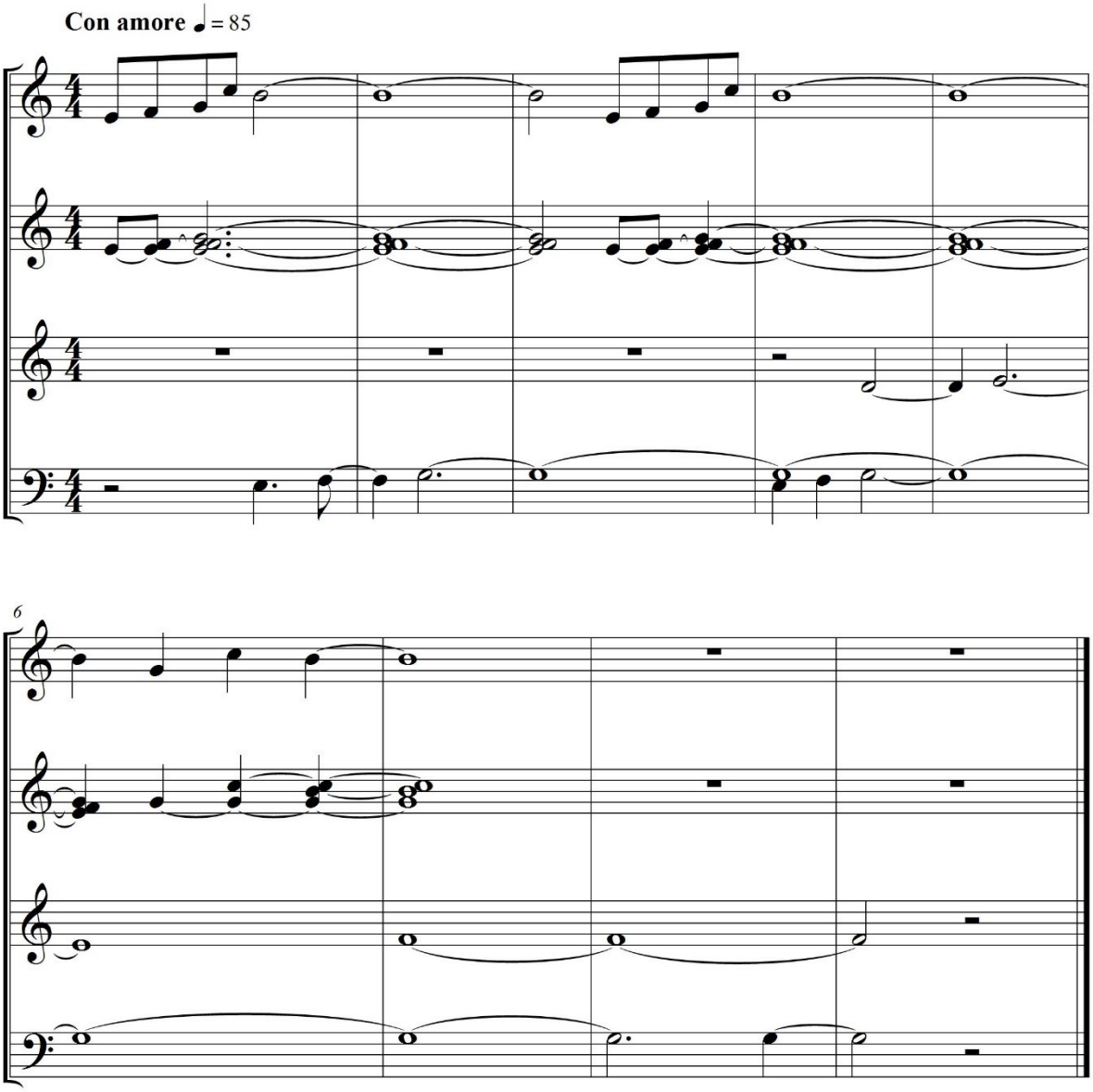
Halfyard argues that Elfman utilizes a characteristic compositional process in the generation of a second, subordinate theme intimately related to the (singular) primary melodic material:

> The Love theme is identical with two small but important exceptions: first, it is in a major key; second, it does not begin on the tonic but on the mediant, and as a result the first interval rises by a minor second instead of a major second. . . . The Love theme is clearly designed to act as Elfman's typical secondary theme, one that is often similar to the principal theme but generally much less used and assigned to more reflective moments within Elfman's actions scores.[64]

As Halfyard notes, however, the Love theme is not simply a major-mode modification of the initial Bat-theme, but also a quotation of Prince's "Scandalous!" one of the original works written for the commercial motion picture soundtrack. Moreover, two cues containing the clearest statements of the Love theme, "Morning After" and "The Truth," are omitted from the final film, resulting in a fifty-five minute thematic void in which only texture and orchestration suggest the Love theme's presence in the narrative, leaving it underdeveloped in the complete product. "The Morning After, a reduction of which is provided in Music Example 1.2, presents the internal dilemma within the Bruce/Batman duality: a desire to continue a serious relationship via his public persona, but the

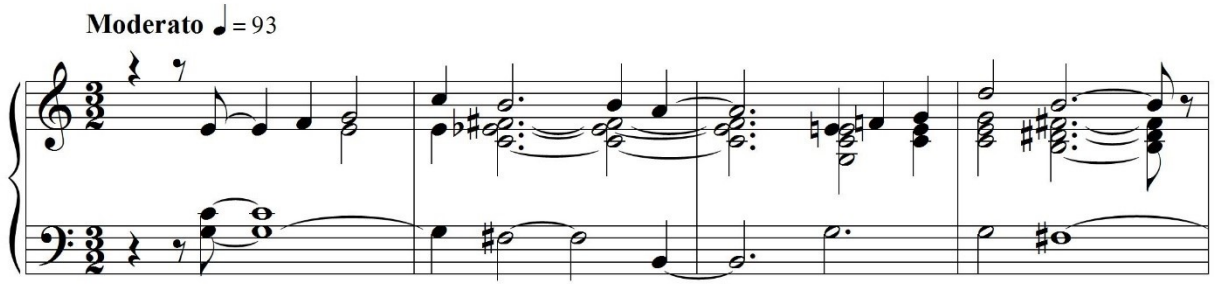
[64] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 99.

trepidation due to how it will interfere with his crime-fighting ways. Just as Bruce is unable to express fully the complex predicament with which he is at odds, the theme continuously sputters within the accompaniment. On the surface, the emotional desire to continue his relationship remains strong and clear through complete statements of the Love theme; the fragmentation of the opening three-note figure and its degrees of augmentation to the primary statements of the complete theme (a strong echo to the initial ambiguity of the Bat-theme's first statements of the Main Titles) convey his unspoken psychological quandary.



Music Example 1.2. Reduction of *Batman*, "Morning After."

"The Truth" presents Bruce at his most vulnerable emotional state throughout the film: the first attempt at his admission to Vicki of his secret identity (the first "outsider" to learn of what lies beneath his public façade). Rather than building harmony from the theme itself, the cue incorporates a preponderance of diminished sonorities (both triads and fully-diminished seventh chords) to add to the psychological instability/uncertainty of Bruce as he struggles to discuss his life. The Love theme appears only once (contrary to Halfyard's identification of multiple appearances) in an unaltered form, with the bass providing an abridged inversion of the Bat-theme (see Example 1.3). The tonal/harmonic stability afforded to the theme is eventually achieved in its closing resolution from C major to B major—a semitone below the key implied by the theme itself, and a semitonal shift more commonly associated with the Joker and his Straussian waltz during his confrontation and execution of former boss Grissom. The sense of harmonic resolution is short-lived, however, as the return of the fully-diminished seventh not only recalls Bruce's inner turmoil, but also foreshadows the impending arrival of another suitor—the Joker.[65]



Music Example 1.3. Reduction of *Batman*, "The Truth," mm. 9-12.

[65] The removal of these cues from the final film place more emphasis on the use of silence to express a sense of discomfort. Halfyard summarizes, "To set these scenes to music, and music designed to act as a romantic counterbalance to the drama of the Bat-theme itself, would make these scenes much less uncomfortable and much more gentle: and in so doing, they would probably make Bruce's desire for a relationship with Vicki seem less problematic for him. The removal of the music renders the scenes cold and awkward, revealing the silence between his lines and Vicki's" (71). From these omissions, Halfyard also speculates that Elfman may have adjusted the rest of the score, particularly towards the beginning, to elevate the status of the theme to equal as opposed to subordinate.

The use of the Bat-theme within the opening titles also reveals elements of Elfman's characteristic harmonic idiom development in film scores, producing variants of what Halfyard terms "modulatory tails" appended to the principal Bat-theme as a means of modulating to foreign keys in rapid succession. From the initial Bat-theme (see Figure 1.1A), extensions permit modulations via perfect fifth (1.1B), descending tone (1.1C), and descending semitone (1.1D), though the perfect fifth modulation is never fully utilized to preserve the aversion to tonic-dominant relationships of Elfman's harmonic vocabulary.

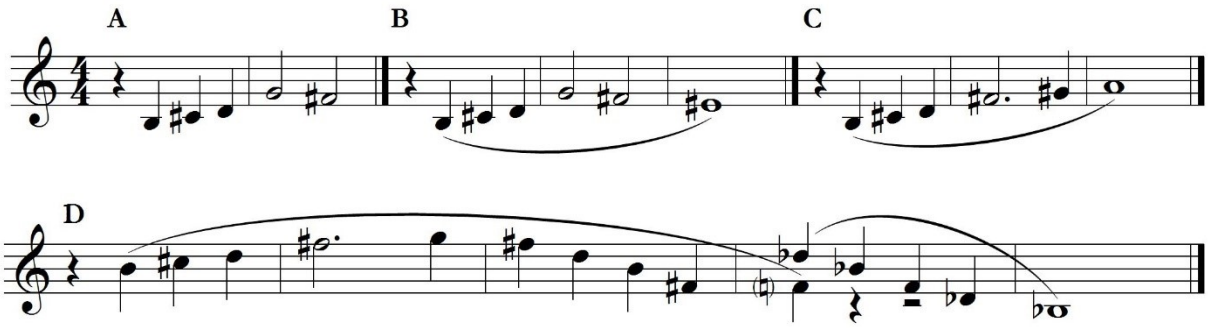


Figure 1.1. Collection of Halfyard's "modulatory tails" of the Bat-theme.[66]

These thematic extensions also utilize minute transformations of the principal theme, particularly in the retrograde of the fourth and fifth notes (1.1C, D) to change the contour of the theme to continuously ascend, and the application of the chromatic inflection (1.1C) to create the leading tone to the new key. Other transformations of the principal theme identified by Halfyard include the expansion of the range via arpeggiation to span a seventh at the apex (1.2B), compression of the range to span a fifth at the apex (1.2C), appending the leading tone to the "descending tone" modulatory tail to create an altered variant of the descending semitone goal (1.2D), a whole tone variant with vague gestures to the musical realm of Jack Napier/Joker (1.2E), and the unification of

[66] Excerpts modified from Ibid. 114 to preserve original notation of the "identified" Bat-theme. This notion of modulatory tails reflects Frank Lehman's idea of the *Chromatically Modulating Cadential Resolution* (CMCR), a technique which overlaps cadence and modulation as a means of "harmonic realignment" in symphonic film music. The buildup to the expected cadence is ultimately denied as the cadential resolution moves to a new tonal center, often chromatically-related to the preceding tonal center. See Frank Lehman, "Hollywood Cadences: Music and the Structure of Cinematic Expectation," *Music Theory Online*, 19, 4 (2013): 12.

the Bat-theme and Love-theme, using the secondary idea as a non-modulatory tail to unite Batman and Bruce Wayne in a single gesture (1.2F).

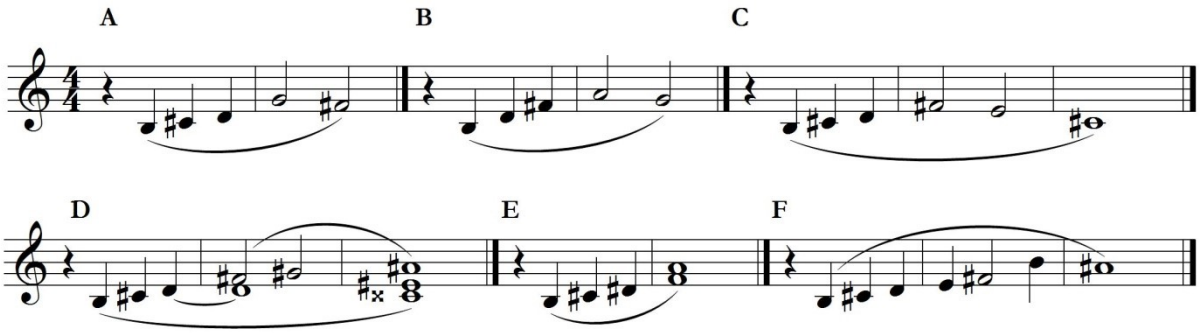
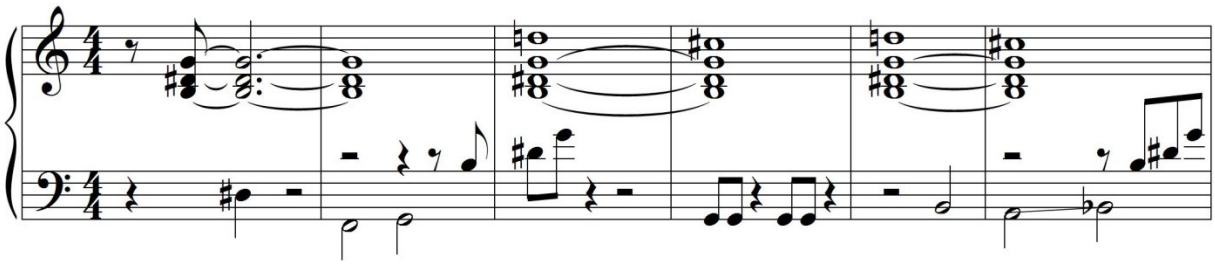


Figure 1.2. Collection of melodic variants of Bat-theme.[67]

Unlike Batman, whose "sonic identity" is expressed by primarily thematic means, the Joker is musically expressed through elements of scale/harmony and rhythm/meter (in addition to timbre). Typically, the Joker's musical fingerprint is established through the use of the whole tone scale, refusing a sense of stability and revealing the unhinged psychological underpinnings of the antagonist as both his recognizable criminal clown and his "human" form before transformation: Jack Napier. Additionally, the use of the whole tone scale articulates a sense of anarchy, indicating characters operating outside the law and within the criminal underworld. This particular association proves pivotal for not only the Joker but for Batman as well in early pairings of the protagonist with the whole tone scale, such as one example identified by Halfyard in Example 1.4, especially when combating criminals in the presence of the police. Despite his well-intentioned efforts to thwart the criminal underbelly plaguing Gotham, Batman continues to operate technically outside of the law, a vigilante who is also wanted by the police for his altruistic, yet still illegal, activity.

[67] Excerpts modified from Ibid. 121, 126, 128.

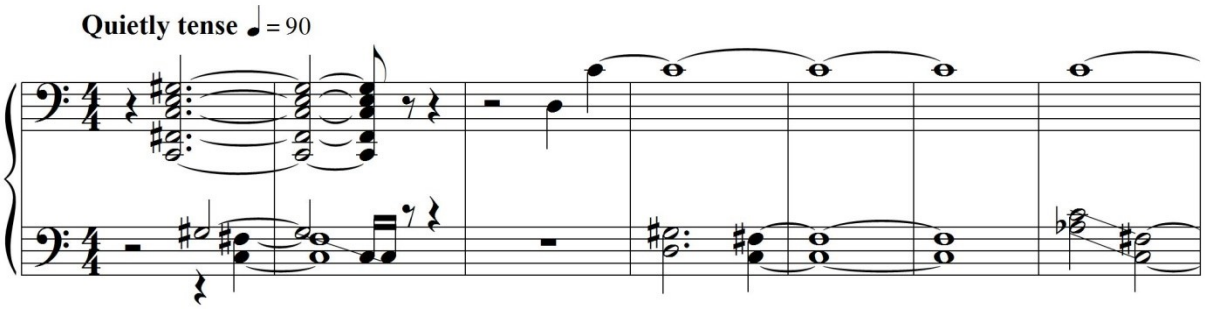


Music Example 1.4. Whole tone scale appearance in *Batman*, "Jack vs. Eckhardt," mm. 19-24.

Halfyard's primary identification of the whole tone scale is problematic, revealing a complete collection (F—G—A—B—C♯ —D♯) but failing to account for the superfluous notes (D, B♭) within approximately a third of the cue. The inclusion of such dissonance, though a staple of Elfman's harmonic vocabulary, without consideration for its melodic and harmonic impact or its significant placement in the outer voices undermines potential conflicting narrative influences. If considering the use of D♮ in mm. 21, 23 as an appoggiatura from the preceding G, creating a leap of a perfect fifth and resolving downward by semitone, its melodic qualities are strongly reminiscent of the Bat-theme, harmonized by a new scalar collection (diatonic vs. whole tone); the ascending semitone adjustment with the use of B♭ in the bass in m.24 can be interpreted as a harkening to the ascending three-note figure at the beginning of the Bat-theme, especially when viewed with the G m. 22. If given a prominent narrative role, the presence of these two pitches outside of the whole tone collection and their melodic-narrative implications represent the unifying force that has brought Jack Napier and Eckhardt together in the moment. If dismissed as dissonant embellishments, they are nothing more than surface abnormalities that emphasize Elfman's free use of dissonance and obscure the underlying whole tone foundation that governs the Joker's musical space.

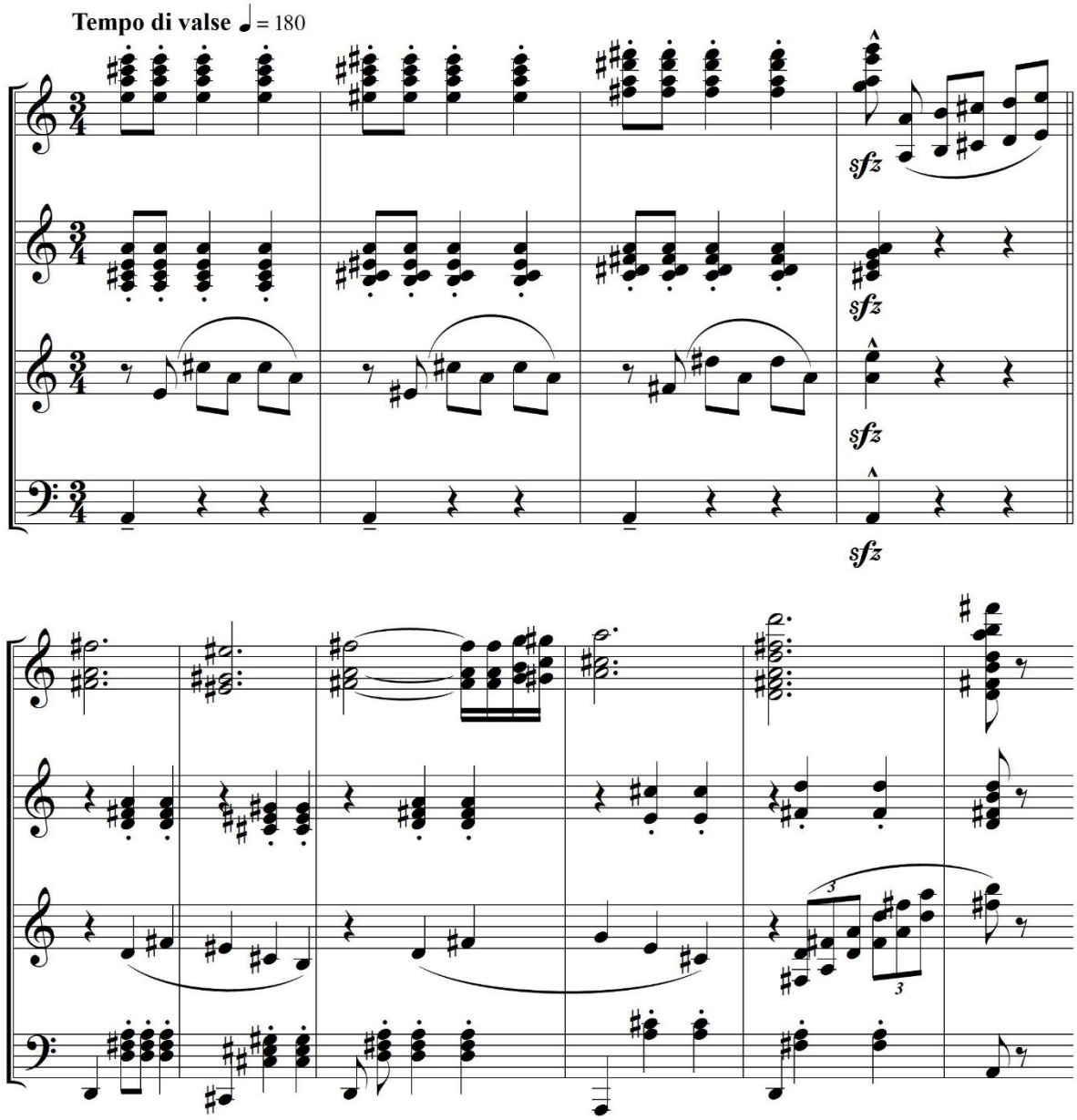
The Joker's musical identity, particularly in relation to his criminal connections, is further expressed in the consistent use of triple meter established in the birth of the newly established central antagonist. Following the (apparent) demise of Jack Napier at Axis Chemicals, Carl Grissom (Jack's superior and the man responsible for the setup) celebrates his successful trap in his office/penthouse, preparing for an evening with his love interest Alicia, the woman who was having an affair with Jack,

and the primary reason for the betrayal (see Example 1.5). Confronted by a shadowy figure slowly entering the room, Grissom discovers that Jack has survived the ordeal as the obscured entity speaks; the arrival of "Jack" is further expressed in the sparse accompaniment, bringing back the whole tone scale and unusual percussion timbres first incorporated in establishing the sonic identity of the gangster.



Music Example 1.5. Reduction of *Batman*, "Faceoff," mm. 7-13.

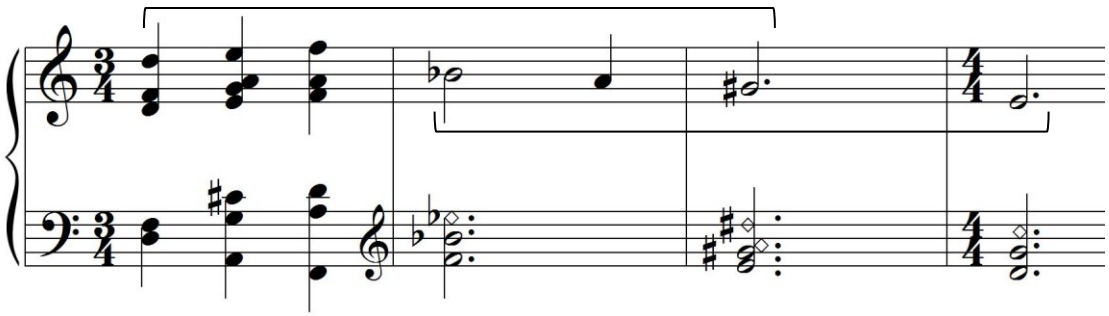
The quiet, subdued accompaniment adds to the growing tension as "Jack" approaches closer to Grissom and the light, his newly-bleached white face luminescing faintly and implying the physical deformation that has taken place despite the preservation of his voice (and musical accompaniment). Jack finally steps forward into the light, gun in hand, to reveal his new persona—coinciding with an abrupt pause of the music following the statement of his name (Joker). Joker opens fire upon his old boss, jubilantly dancing about the office as he unloads the complete magazine into Grissom's lifeless body; the macabre and brutal execution is offset by a "Straussian" waltz emanating from within Joker's mind, echoing the cold-hearted disconnect from his actions and depicting his unbridled joy in committing violence (see Example 1.6).



Music Example 1.6. Reduction of "Straussian" waltz from *Batman*, "The Shootout," mm. 38-47.

Israel Solis's dissertation inadvertently combines elements of Halfyard's work of melodic tails and tritonal significance in a pivotal moment of the *Batman* score omitted by Halfyard that brings about an acknowledgement of death and its significance in the emotional and psychological development of Bruce/Batman. As Vicki spies on Bruce and follows him down a dark alley, she observes his unusual behavior as he approaches a secluded yet sacred spot: the location of his parents' murder. Producing

flowers from beneath his coat, Bruce kneels and places his makeshift memorial upon the ground. A version of the Bat-theme is sounded—a noticeably rare occasion of pairing Bruce with the sonic identity of his super alter-ego—with a distinct melodic tail outlining a tritone not only between its apex and the concluding tone, but also the initial pitch and longest-sustained pitch within the melody (see Example 1.7). Solis, however, omits further discussion and/or analysis of the melodic significance of this moment (both in terms of melodic content and deviation from Halfyard's interpretation of encoding the Bat-theme as a "non-Bruce" entity).[68]

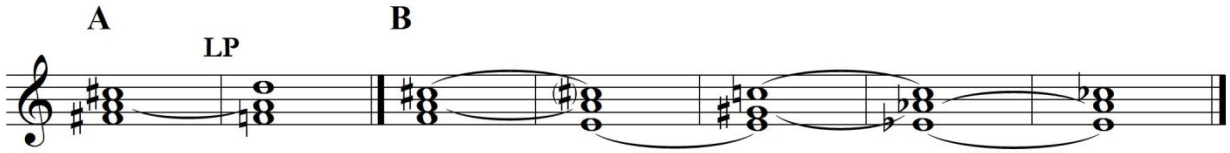


Music Example 1.7. Reduction of *Batman*, "Vicki Spies," mm. 29-32, with melodic tritones outlined.

In addition to the incorporation of a tritonal melodic tail, Solis also identifies a characteristic harmonic progression utilized at the end of the cue which employs an atypical (more directly, nontonal) alternation of F♯- →D- triads, ultimately concluding with gradual semitonal shifts towards an unresolved half-diminished seventh chord to mirror the internal dissonance of the protagonist still grieving from the loss of his parents.[69] This semitonal voice leading motion contained within the cue is provided in the reduction of Example 1.8.

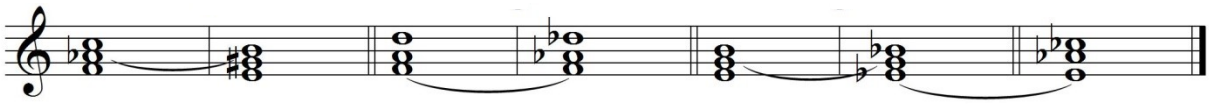
[68] See Israel Solis, "(Re)creating a Hero's Narrative Through Music: Different Musical Landscapes in Six Live Action Batman Films," Ph. D. dissertation (University of Arizona, 2013), 61-63.

[69] See Ibid. 63 for Solis's original reduction.



Music Example 1.8. Characteristic semitonal motion of triadic alternation (A) and descent (B) from *Batman*, "Vicki Spies."[70]

The use of a fully-diminished seventh in alternation with minor sonorities creates pillars of stability and instability during the "Batmobile Chase," serving as an aural representation of the Joker's henchmen pursuing Bruce and Vicki through the streets of Gotham City.[71] A similar narrativizing common-tone progression from a prior scene is identified by Halfyard through the use of "mediant" preservation, providing an elusive tonal center as Vicki and her companion/coworker Alexander Knox, a firm believer in the existence of the Bat-man despite constant ridicule from colleagues and the public, explore sprawling Wayne Manor and attempt to discover some sordid secrets of their mysterious host.[72] This mediant preservation progression Halfyard identifies, which contains three distinct **S**LIDE transformations within twenty-two measures, is provided in the harmonic reduction in Example 1.9.



Music Example 1.9. Semitonal motion identified by Halfyard in *Batman*, "Batzone," mm. 15-37.

[70] Subsequent analyses of harmonic progressions will incorporate previously identified Neo-Riemannian labels, as well as Murphy's methodology for "tonal-triadic progression classes" (TTPCs) discussed in Chapter 3, where appropriate.

[71] Ibid. 65-72.

[72] See Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 122, for the original reduction. Halfyard's original reduction does not identify the progressions with **SLIDE** transformations but through mediant retention and includes occasional passing tones to identify sonorities outside of the triadic motion.

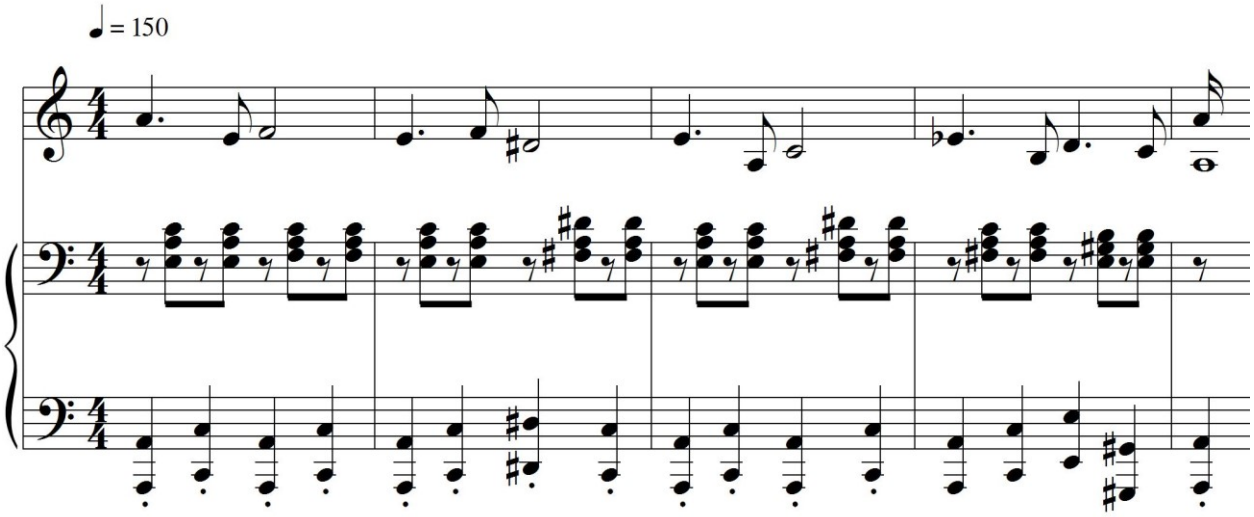
Solis and Halfyard, however, relegate harmony to secondary status in their interpretations of the scenes. The alternating quality of the **LP** progression identified by Solis, though introduced as atypical and paired with the significance of death, is considered subordinate to both timbre and dynamics. The loud brass articulations of these harmonies, contrasting with the serene and subdued glockenspiel statement of the Bat-theme and its melodic tail (with no accompaniment), creates a pairing which focuses on dynamic shift, identifying the brief excerpt as a *Qualitative Iconic Metaphor* (QIM) of NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IS INCREASE IN DYNAMICS.[73] The use of the alternating diminished seventh/minor sonorities are not extrapolated to show relationships within the chordal progressions, but rather as non-thematic content that alternates with statements of the Bat-theme (regardless of mutation), creating a musical counterpoint that mirrors the visual interplay between the two forces. Such boundaries coincide with filmic cues, for the Bat-theme (unaccompanied harmonically with the exception of a bass ostinato) is reserved for protagonist space (Batman, Batmobile, and Vicki), and harmonic elements are reserved for antagonist space (Joker's henchmen). Halfyard likewise reduces harmonic qualities of the identified progressions in deference to their parallels to modulations achieved not by harmonic motion but rather in relationship to the melodic tails. Nevertheless, both agree with the notion that harmonic dissonance—not simply in simultaneities but also in ultimate resolution—serve as parallels to the unease and tension felt within the characters. Solis summarizes the resulting tension as a *Structural Iconic Metaphor* (SIM), defined in this case as LACK OF NARRATIVE CLOSURE IS DISSONANT HARMONIC RESOLUTION.[74]

In addition to *Batman*, Halfyard has also explored the significance of the melodic tritone in the main theme of *Beetlejuice* (see Example 1.10). Set in strong counterpoint to the opening overhead shots of the picturesque New England countryside, the principal theme for the titular character sets an

[73] Solis's use of the analytical model of QIM is drawn from Chapter 3 of Juan Chattah's dissertation, which explores the mapping of visual or narrative elements through devices such as frequency and/or of pitch for physical space, pacing of musical events for physical movement, dynamics for psychological tension, distortion of instrumental timbre or degree of consonance/dissonance for tension of psychological state. See Juan Roque Chattah, *Semiotics, Pragmatics, and Metaphor in Film Music Analysis*, Ph. D. diss. (2006), 28-40, for additional examples of QIM.

[74] See Solis, *(Re)creating a Hero's Narrative Through Music*, 63. The use of SIM is also drawn from Juan Chattah's dissertation (41-59).

angular melody with dissonant, syncopated accents in the accompaniment providing a demonic dance-like feel which betrays the visual tranquility and foreshadows the otherworldly events to follow.



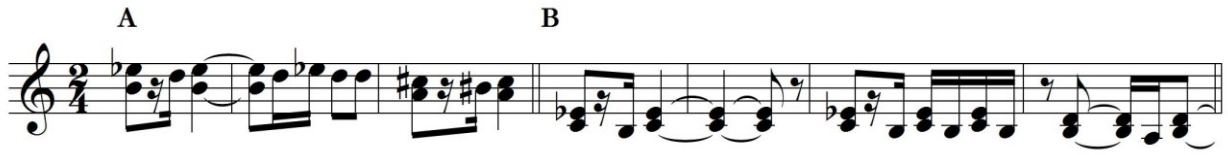
Music Example 1.10. Transcription of *Beetlejuice*, main theme.

Halfyard's analysis, while venturing into melodic territory, still remains entrenched in "traditional" Elfman scholarship of timbre. Rather than focusing on the identifiable qualities of Elfman's score, however, Halfyard explores the historical influences on Elfman's setting of the horror-comedy genre, particularly the use of the violin to express the devil/demonic entities (see Example 1.11). Following the initial statement of the main theme by the horns, a rapid violin line stirs musical/artistic antecedents of the devil as a virtuosic fiddler.

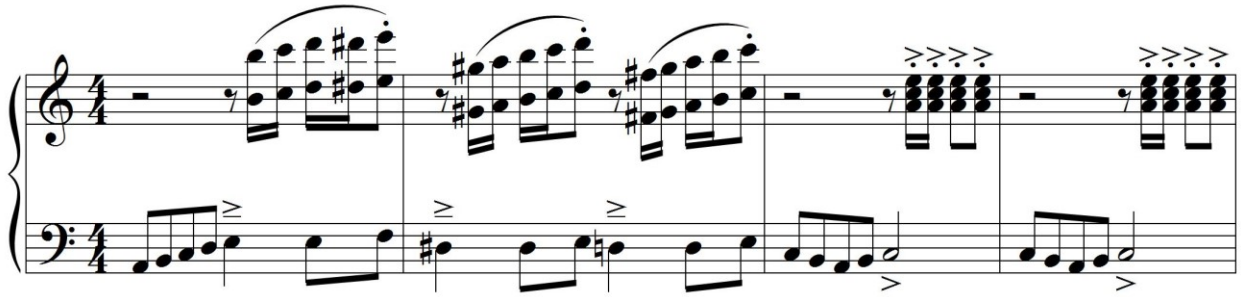
Music Example 1.11. Transcription of "Devil as Fiddler" passage in *Beetlejuice*, "Main Titles."[75]

[75] Halfyard discusses this depiction of the devil drawing from two sources: Camille Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre*, and Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*. The mentioning of *Danse Macabre* also reinforces the melodic/harmonic aspect of the tritone, as the retuning of the E string to E♭ creates a tritone with the (open) A string.

In addition to musical references, Halfyard notes allusion/quotation as a source of demonic coding in the score. The first appearance of the poltergeist Betelgeuse (1.12A) mimics Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* (1.12B), recalling not only instrumentation in the violin, but also pitch/intervallic content and contour, chromatic sliding, and the use of disjunct rhythms. The main theme itself also contains a brief allusion to Grieg's *Peer Gynt* (1.13), providing a momentary suggestion of trolls from the principal theme from "In the Hall of the Mountain King."[76]



Music Example 1.12. Comparison of Betelgeuse's first appearance (A) and Stravinsky's The Soldier's Tale ("Tango"), mm. 1-4.[77]



Music Example 1.13. Transcription of *Beetlejuice*, main theme, "In the Hall of the Mountain King" reference.

Halfyard's emphasis on predefined cultural and historical codes of articulating the presence of the devil in music certainly accentuate the horror aspects of the diegesis but greatly overlook the general essence of the character Betelgeuse in deference to his setting. The presence of death serves as a catalyst for action and as a literal location in the bureaucratic Netherworld as well as contributes

[76] Ibid. 32.

[77] Examples are drawn from Janet Halfyard, "Mischief Afoot: Supernatural Horror-comedies and the *Diabolus in Musica*," in *Music in the Horror Film*, ed. Neil Lerner (New York: Routledge, 2010), 33. Examples have been rewritten to facilitate comparison, rather than preserve notated specificity.

to the critical component of the real vs. fantastic divide in Burtonian narrative structures, but the notion of Betelgeuse as devil necessitates viewing the antagonist in the narrative as necessarily evil rather than simply in opposition. At no point in the film with respect to visual or dialogue cues is there any reference to the devil; any referential coding Halfyard derives for analysis can only be drawn from nineteenth- and twentieth-century musical conventions. Additionally, particular emphasis is given to Elfman's early career predilection for the use of the whole tone scale, which naturally contains multiple instances of tritones as opposed to single instances within diatonic scales. The whole tone scale does appear in *Beetlejuice*, but is most directly incorporated in the desolate desert infested with monstrous worms capable of consuming any human figure living or deceased. Such a land is a completely separate entity and serves as a genuine "outlier" in terms of narrative spaces, given its own musical coding otherwise not incorporated in the film.[78]

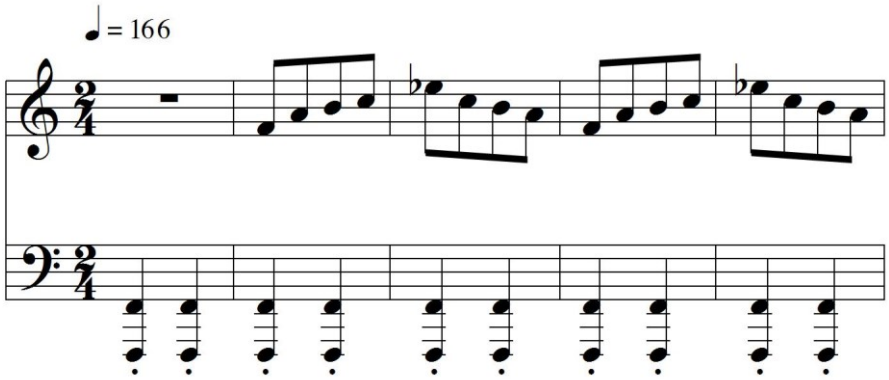
Of other significance to Halfyard's analysis for expressing demonic elements in general is the use of the Lydian scale and its ability to form a tritone with the tonic. While the main theme for *Beetlejuice* does incorporate the "characteristic" Lydian scale degree ($\sharp\hat{4}$), the main theme and entire score itself is decisively devoid of Lydian modal qualities with respect to harmony or function. The musical allusions to the devil and Betelgeuse which Halfyard cites ultimately seem more apropos to her description for the brief reference to Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*: "[E]ven a listener unfamiliar with Stravinsky will likely understand . . . that Beetlejuice is a *very shifty character indeed*."[79]

This sense of "shiftiness" best pairs with the actions and motivation of Betelgeuse: mischievousness. He is a self-described "bio-exorcist," willing to assist the deceased in eradicating the living by any means necessary. He willingly operates outside the strict organization of the Netherworld, using cruel and macabre pranks to complete his job. Moreover, his ultimate goal is to escape the Netherworld and cause chaos in the land of the living. His pranks, though dark in nature, are never directly intended to cause severe physical harm or death. Such childish activity can be viewed as a

[78] See Ibid. 27 for Halfyard's discussion of the realm as a "Hellish" dimension and brief parallels to the use of the whole tone scale to identify the Joker's musical space in *Batman*.

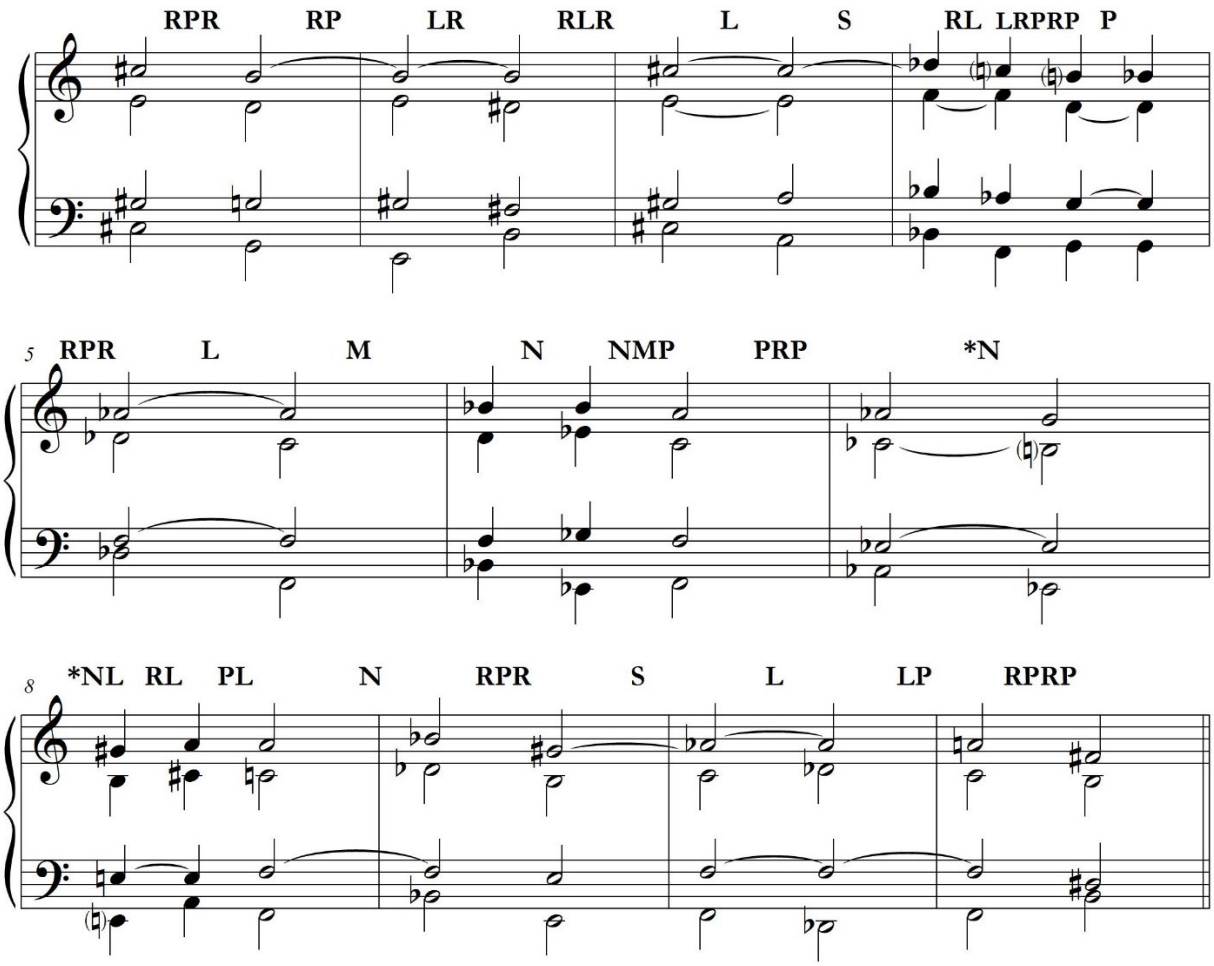
[79] Ibid. 33, emphasis added.

more extreme and morbid antagonistic characterization of Burton's previous titular character: Pee-Wee Herman. Musically, Elfman connects the two mischievous individuals through emphasis of the tritone as principal elements of their themes. The opening titles for *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* depict the childlike protagonist by emphasizing two tritones through the use of the Lydian-Mixolydian scale in the opening ostinato (see Example 1.14), creating tritonal relationships with both the tonic and mediant scale degrees. The resulting ostinato figure outlines the tonic tritone metrically during its ascent and the mediant tritone linearly through its descent.



Music Example 1.14. Transcription of opening ostinato to *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "Main Titles."

While much of Halfyard's work has centered on the melodic qualities of Elfman's writing, Frank Lehman's dissertation explores the harmonic aspects through transformational analysis. His recent work in film music provides a brief foray into Elfman's film scoring technique in the superhero genre, creating a sense of tonal ambiguity through nonfunctional progressions noticeably void of establishing a firm tonal center and utilizing a strong aversion to diatonic motions. In his analysis of the main titles to *Spider-Man* (2002), Lehman reveals the efficacy of such methodology for Elfman's work (as well as film music in general)—albeit outside the collaboration with Tim Burton. A modified version of Lehman's transcription and analysis is provided in Example 1.15.



Music Example 1.15. Chordal reduction of Lehman's transcription from *Spider-Man*, "Main Titles."[80]

While Lehman's transcriptions and analyses of Elfman excerpts do not include specific transformational cycles that provide a distinct governing logic of harmonic progressions, or networks which map triadic motions beyond the provided neo-Riemannian labels, it does serve to provide an

[80] For the original transcription, see Frank Lehman, "Reading Tonality Through Film: Transformational Hermeneutics and the Music of Hollywood," Ph. D. diss, (Harvard, 2012), 203. The chordal reduction utilizes minimal voice leading above a root-motion "bass" line, designed to show the nominal motion of individual pitches between chords. The ***N** transformation identified in m. 7 is indicative of a ***N****ebenverwandt* with the adjustment of raising the chordal fifth to create the resulting augmented triad, and the ***NL** in m.8 indicates a lowering of the chordal fifth before the operation.

The provided reduction, however, contains some changes from Lehman's original labels at the suggestion of Scott Murphy. Lehman's original label in m. 6 uses **NMLR**, but the present author has identified the transformation as **NMP**, as the successive **NM** operations should undo the previous two transformations, leaving only a **P**arallel motion between F+ → F- to complete the transformation. Scott Murphy suggests the first transformation in m. 8 as ***NL**, as opposed to Lehman's identified **L**, due to the preceding augmented chord and the required semitonal distance. Forrest Pierce also notes that the **LRPRP** transformation in m.4 can be shortened to **SPR**.

alternative framework for harmonic analysis of the highly chromatic, "unusual" progressions identified as a quintessential aspect of Elfman's distinct sound. The plausibility of transformational validity within Elfman's music and the notion of distinct and/or repetitive harmonic patterns projecting "tonal" functions (such as chordal progressions articulating a unique "dominant" role in the absence of traditional dominant-functioning harmonies) are also explored in Lehman's analysis of the costume montage. The protagonist's relentless pursuit of establishing a visual identity is aurally depicted through triadic progressions of the score:

> What Elfman invites us to hear is not a succession of autonomous chordal objects, static and weighted in a pre-determined pitch space; rather we follow a single sonorous host, one self-same Klang, as it is sent through a kaleidoscopic web of chromatic transformations. In the triadic-Klang processual chromaticism of Elfman's "Costume Montage," it is best to interpret the cue's roving triad as a kind of incipient harmonic notion. On one hand, this idea seeks out tonal clarity, thus adhering to the scene's need for a costume-realization telos. On the other, it relishes pure harmonic experimentation and surprise, fulfilling the scene's need to communicate and hopefully reproduce some of Parker's adolescent thrill in seeking out his new identity.[81]

Towards a "Composite Theory" of transformational processes of melody, harmony, and rhythm/meter

Proponents of Elfman's film scores rely on the identification of the quintessential "Elfman sound" as defined largely by timbral qualities—a feature which remains largely debated concerning the true authorship of such attributes. While the degree of influence from orchestrator Steve Bartek remains debated, it nevertheless remains present as a component of the final product; the assertion of Shirley Walker's role in the finished score (whether solely as conductor, or as contributing composer and/or orchestrator) similarly blurs the validity of timbre as the distinctive identifier of Elfman's compositional thumbprint. Halfyard's analysis of the *Batman* score presents a prominent focus on melodic/motivic development of a central theme—a technique which the composer himself stresses

[81] Ibid. 206.

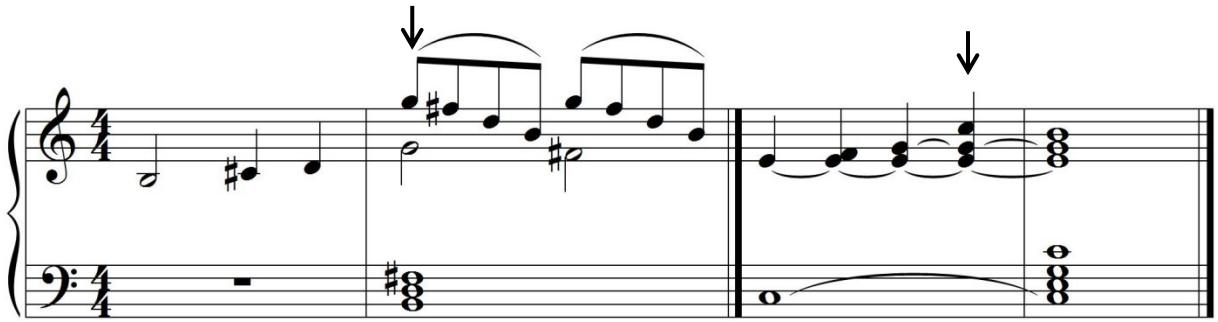
as a foundation for his process. Such work offers a significant potential for a music-centric analysis with respect to distinct processes inherent in Elfman's scores, uniting previous discussions of the narrative dichotomy inherent in Burton's films with different methods for characterization and development. Although Elfman's principally monothematic score for *Batman* limits the potential for a detailed leitmotivic analysis afforded by later, more thematically enriched works such as *Sleepy Hollow*, Halfyard identifies critical components otherwise omitted in the vast majority of Elfman scholarship: "Elfman uses different strategies such as changes in modality and meter as his principal techniques to achieve a comparable result. In particular, he uses triple time in contrast to duple time, major key in contrast to minor key, and the whole-tone scale in opposition to the romantic harmonic idiom, these musical ideas being used to create and underline the sense of duality."[82]

Despite the pivotal inroads generated by the text, however, inconsistencies in analytical terminology and procedures and a constantly shifting lens of "defining qualities" creates ambiguities and capricious relationships that remain tenuous at best. The identification of the Bat-theme fluctuates between distinct intervallic patterns and generalizations of contour, producing very loose threads of connectivity between some of the potential "Bat-theme"-related figures. One of the primary features of the Bat-theme is the scalar ascent from the tonic of the minor scale leading to a characteristic leap, usually by the interval of a perfect fourth. The Love theme, by contrast, features an ascent from the major mediant, resulting in a slight reversal of intervallic pattern; despite this minute change, however, the general contour between the two themes remains identical, with modality serving as a more driving force between their divide.

The relationship and differentiation between the Bat-theme and the Love theme (seen in the outright refusal to consider the Love theme as an independent entity) also contains considerable issues, particularly when considering the distinct roles of individual pitches from a melodic, harmonic, and metric viewpoint simultaneously. Halfyard's analysis identifies the symmetry between the two themes in their ascending scalar pattern leading to a characteristic leap of a perfect fourth, with modality

[82] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 62.

serving as a primary boundary between the two themes; the melodic profile presented in the text removes rhythmic/metric considerations from the outset of the analysis and comparisons. The characteristic leap, however, occurs in contradictory temporal locations and results in differing harmonic relationships. A comparison of the two themes, presented in Example 1.16, reveals the disparity between the two themes. The Bat-theme places the arrival of the perfect fourth interval on a metrically significant downbeat, usually the first beat of the (notated) measure; the harmony remains static throughout, with the leap creating a dissonant appoggiatura that ultimately resolves down by a semitone.[83] The Love theme, however, shifts the location of the leap to a considerably weaker metrical position, usually on the final beat of the (notated) measure, and moves to a consonance (generally, the chordal root) that ultimately resolves to become the dissonant major seventh within the sonority.

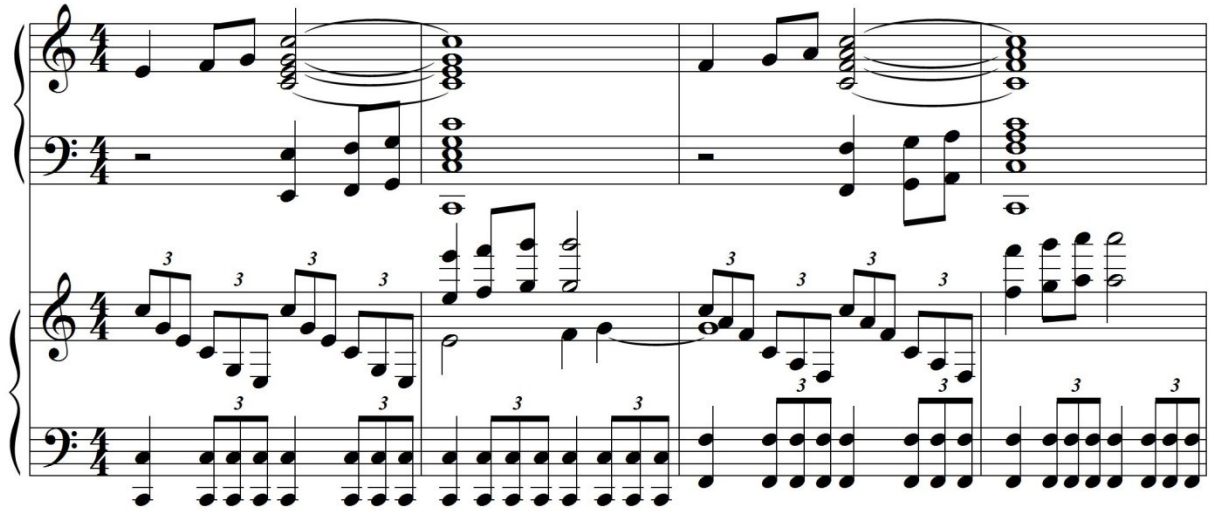


Music Example 1.16. Comparison of harmonic and metric tendencies of Bat-theme and Love theme.

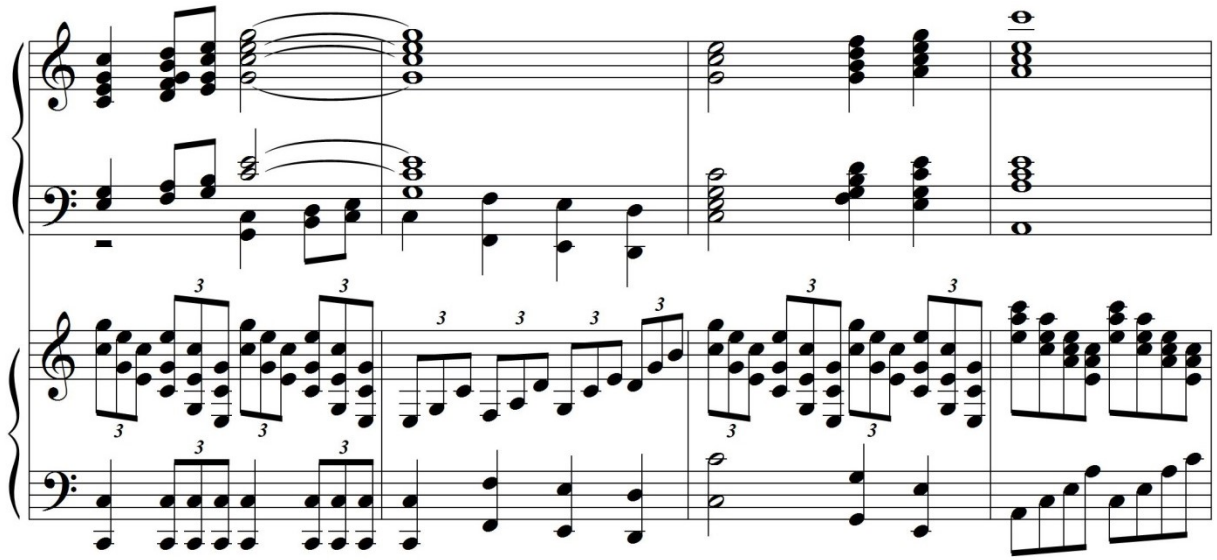
These issues of contour and thematic identification produce a significant conflict within the summation of the Finale, where the identification of alternating statements of the Bat-theme and the Love theme are arbitrarily assigned through alternating "defining" elements (see Example 1.17). Halfyard's primary means of differentiating between the two themes is through the location of the

[83] Within the "march" of the opening titles, the metric and harmonic qualities are modified slightly, with the arrival of the leap occurring on a weaker metric location (usually on the second beat of a quadruple meter); the harmony parallels this shift by fluctuating from i → VI, with the "appoggiatura" becoming the chord root (resulting in an **L** transformation between the two harmonies). While this does disrupt the previously mentioned tendency to place the appoggiatura on a metrically significant location, the duration of the leap remains elongated when compared to the ascending scalar pattern and the resolution, keeping the emphasis on the characteristic interval as opposed to its subsequent resolution. An additional alternative involves preserving the metric tendency of the appoggiatura (arriving on a metrically significant downbeat) but resulting in a dissonant polychord, overlapping VI/i and combining the two harmonies articulated in the main titles.

initiating pitch with respect to harmony (either root or mediant) and the presence of the major second interval between the first and second melodic pitches, creating an "echo" effect of thematic statements of similar contour. As Halfyard readily admits, however, the major modality dominates throughout the section, completely removing one of the essential elements of the Bat-theme as a unique (and more primary) entity. Similarly, the quintessential leap of the characteristic perfect fourth to a dissonance is reduced in the second statement (a "Bat-theme" iteration) to coincide with a strictly consonant sonority; such consonance deviates from the previously-established characteristic qualities of the theme itself (let alone the absence of a minor second interval). The reduction utilized in the analysis focuses solely on melodic statements (and subsequent echoes), omitting the harmonic incongruities as well as the fragmentation and augmentation of the theme in interior voices, a retrograde statement of the initial three pitches in the bass (which lends, perhaps, the strongest credence to a genuine "Bat-theme" statement through its intervallic patterning) and rhythmically dissonant ostinato.



Music Example 1.17. Reduction of *Batman*, "Finale," mm. 37-45.

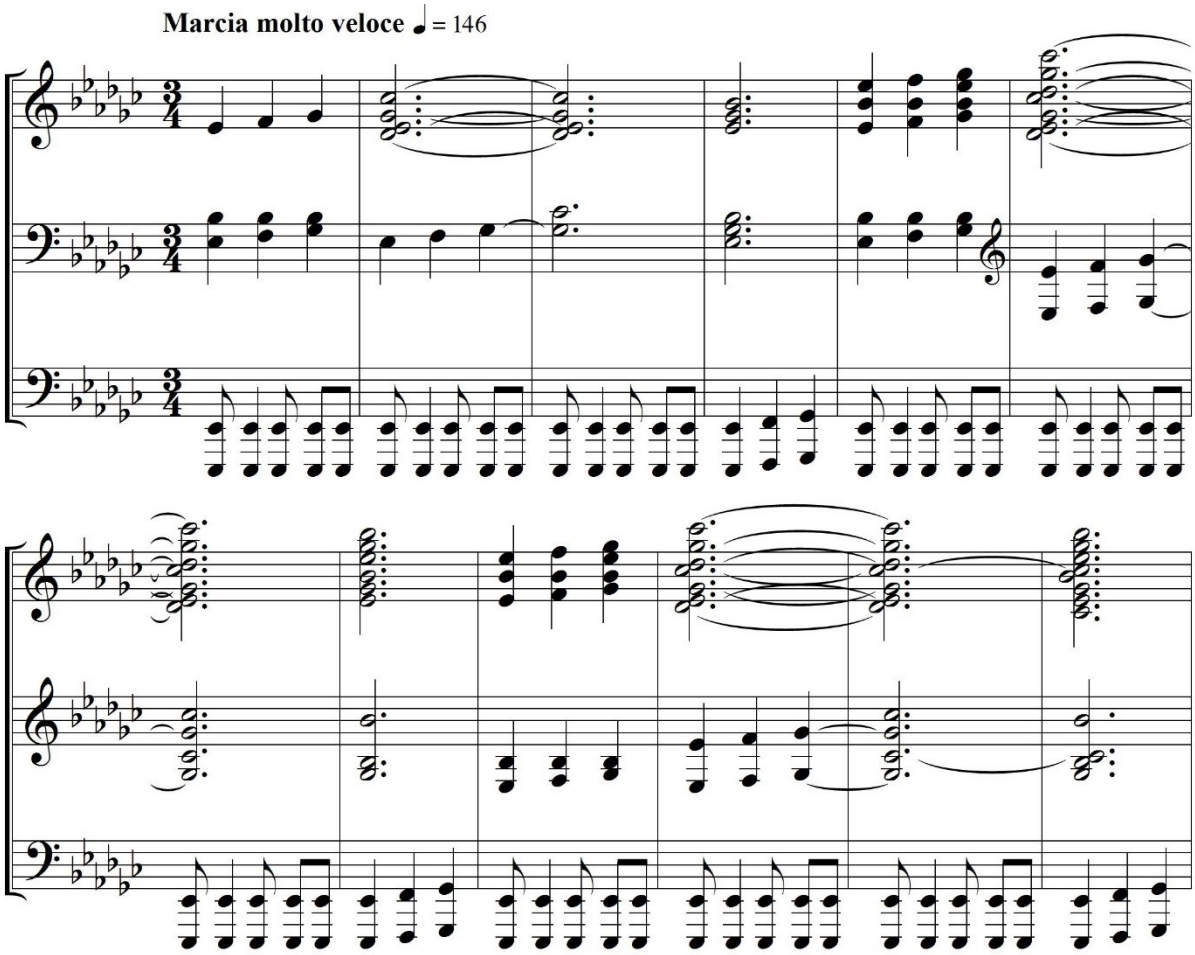


Music Example 1.17, continued.

Beyond issues of melodic identification, however, Halfyard's discussion of rhythm and meter centers on strictly written qualities of the score, primarily with regards to triple associations, and neglects the organizational and perceptual qualities of the music. The identification of $\frac{3}{4}$ as the primary meter for the Joker stems from the Straussian waltz utilized in the "grand reveal" of the character to Grissom (and the audience). While the notated meter reiterates the triple quality, the quick tempo (♩ =180) suggests a perceptual metric organization centered around a different beat unit (𝅗𝅥. =60), thus making the waltz a *compound* meter (as opposed to the notated simple triple which defines Halfyard's interpreted boundaries) concerning the division of the beat, necessitating a (re)consideration of the measure as the locus of an identifiable tactus—and, consequently, a (re)consideration of the rhythmic/metric elements from the notated to the perceptual. Similarly, the identification of $\frac{6}{8}$ repeats this rhythmic/metric organizational divide, placing emphasis on a triplet submetrical (division) grouping structure over overtly duple metrical (beat) organizations.

While the Straussian waltz introducing the Joker in the narrative is one of the more prolonged instances of "triple meter" within the score, it is not the first musical moment of definitive triple groupings. The close of the main titles, presented in Example 1.18, brings about a transformation of

the Bat-theme in $\frac{3}{4}$, considerably slower (♩ = 146) when compared to the Joker's waltz, which places the primary pulse in the (more aptly defined) temporal boundaries identified in Halfyard's original analysis.



Music Example 1.18. Reduction of *Batman*, "Main Titles," mm. 67-79.

While Halfyard's identification of the Straussian waltz (inadvertently) addresses the notion of triple groupings at a submetric level, the statements of the Bat-theme at the close of the main titles introduces triple groupings at both the metric (beat) and hypermetric (measure) levels. The four-measure theme is stated three times (4x3) in the higher register, with a delayed echo of the theme an octave lower and measure later (1+3x3); the bass concludes each four-measure group with the ascending three-note fragment of the theme before returning to the accompanying rhythmic ostinato.

The significance of triple/triplet figures within the main titles is not restricted to the close of the section; the beginning of the "march" incorporates a (submetric) triplet accompaniment which freely blends in rhythmic consonance and dissonance with statements of the main theme.[84] Halfyard suggests a potential relationship to this dichotomy within the protagonist, noting, "Throughout the film, instances of Batman or Bruce's music occurring in triple time usually have some implications in relation to the darker side of his nature, Bruce's secrets, and Batman's potential to be like his enemies. In the internal working of the Bat-theme, the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter encodes an idea of Bruce-Batman's own internal duality and battle with the irrational."[85] The application of "triple," however, remains imprecise in its connotation, as the analysis centers on notation over (filmic) experience.

This incorporation of triple structures within the main titles—paired exclusively with various shots of a rotating, three-dimensional figure of the iconic logo of the protagonist, serves as a crucial moment of both recall and foreshadowing, mirroring the scenes which encompass this musical identifier. The film begins with a family robbed at gunpoint by two street thugs in a dark, secluded alleyway—an incident nearly identical to the circumstances which gave birth to the Batman identity. Celebrating their recent success, the thugs discuss the mysterious events which have negatively affected their criminal cohorts—a figure (unspecified if truly man or animal, but simply referred to as "The BAT") operating outside the law, attacking criminals with his own methods of "justice" before leaving them to be recovered by the police (a fate to which they ultimately succumb as well). The first scene following the main titles introduces the opposite side of the societal token, as the mayor, chief of police, and district attorney openly discuss their efforts to quell the criminal underbelly plaguing the city. Such efforts of justice are restricted to methods of codified laws and regulations—a realm which Batman does not genuinely belong. These framing scenes present Batman as an ultimate outsider who belongs to neither and both realms of society simultaneously: a vigilante who stops crimes by committing them.

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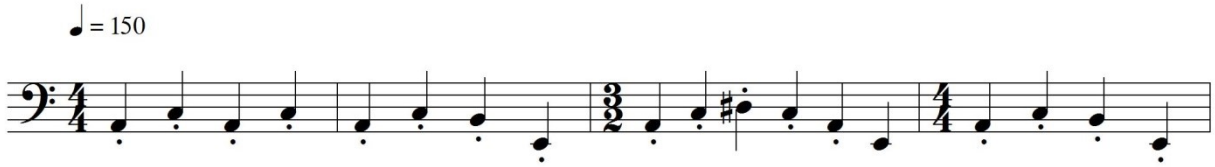
[84] These considerations of submetric, metric, and hypermetric triple grouping structures, as well as the significance of rhythmic consonance and dissonance between these levels, will be explored more in depth in Chapter 4.

[85] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 117.

This concept of triple metric organizations denoting a sense of "otherness" in the Burtonian narrative extends further into unexplored characteristics of the main theme to *Beetlejuice*—a notion originally restricted to strictly melodic techniques that reflect both historical tendencies to portray devilish qualities and Elfman's predilection to incorporate the tritone. Prior to the initial statement of the main theme in the horns, the melodic tritone appears in the preceding tuba melody (1.19), echoing previously identified Elfman tendencies for placing melodic lines in the bass and drawing further connections to the Underworld. Unlike the principal theme, however, this initial bass line does not preserve a consistent duple metric structure; the appearance of the melodic tritone coincides with a distinctly triple metric grouping structure, simultaneously uniting melody and meter to initiate a sense of "Otherness" in multiple levels of the narrative—living and deceased, benevolent and malevolent.



Music Example 1.19. Transcription of *Beetlejuice*, "Main Titles," initial bass line.

While immediately recognizable features such as timbre remain valid avenues of interpretation and analysis of Elfman's work, they are not the sole means of providing a sense of interconnectivity between the aural and visual elements of the filmic narrative. Moreover, despite the inconsistencies in terminology, Halfyard's work, in conjunction with Lehman, Solis, and others, has laid a foundation for further exploration of "intra"-musical elements of Elfman's music—more specifically, the use of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic/metric techniques for specific narrative elements. Using "transformation" as the terminological hinge from which to pivot to other avenues of analytical methodology, non-orchestral techniques can be abandoned in favor of these three primary musical qualities, relating their evolving states with corresponding diegetic parallels.

It is from this terminological divergent point of transformation that analyses of melody, harmony, and rhythm/meter in Burtonian films will diverge from orchestration and timbre as the primary means of identifying an Elfman sound. Of the three characteristics, Elman's thematic writing

generally receives the most attention in analytical discourse, and has had the most direct application in terms of applying the notion of transformation. Often, parallels are drawn between Elfman's thematic development and historical antecedents in Wagnerian leitmotiv, a tradition supposedly inherent in classical and contemporary film music, but such comparisons may omit crucial characteristics of "genuine" leitmotivic methodology in favor of a more readily identifiable surface level distinction. To illustrate Elfman's thematic-transformational tendencies within a Burtonian filmworld most accurately, a (re)definition of filmic leitmotiv technique becomes a necessary first step.

CHAPTER 2:

TRANSFORMATIVE THEMATIC PROCESSES AND INTERRELATION WITH BURTONIAN ARCHETYPES

The role of melody and theme has long been considered the primary focal point for discussion and analysis in Elfman's film scoring technique for interviews with the composer, popular discussion and trade magazines, and academic discourse. Such preferential treatment is not entirely arbitrary; the early statements of the composer, declaring his working methodology and his natural gravitation towards melodic construction, make thematic design the typical foundation for both composition and analysis. A typical scoring collaboration begins early in the project with a visitation to the production, surveying the set and identifying the visual ambiance for the film. Experimentation with themes begins relatively immediately, exploring possibilities that match the visual, dramatic, emotional, and psychological tenor of the film as a whole. To assess the quality of the newly composed thematic ideas, Elfman superimposes these melodies against various integral dramatic scenes from the film, usually three or four pivotal moments selected from different acts of the narrative structure. Rather than validate the preservation of uniformity of the individuality for each individual theme, however, Elfman utilizes these scenes as a litmus test for various transformations and modifications of his themes to ensure their flexibility and cohesion to the filmic whole. Elfman summarizes the necessary considerations during this procedure:

> I'll take the theme and figure out whether I can play half of it and still recognize it. Then, does it work in a major and a minor key? Can I turn it from funny to spooky? Can I cut it down to just three notes and still make it recognizable? These are some of the acid tests I put a theme through while I'm composing.[1]

Following the initial creation of potential themes, the director (or producer) is brought in to confirm the effectiveness and general tenor of the thematic material. If approved, Elfman tends to return to the beginning of the film and work chronologically, utilizing the principal themes as the

[1] Quoted in Janet Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 27.

source material for the rest of the composition. Unlike the original development of primary material, though, this stage tends to devolve into a far less organized process and proceed in a very haphazard manner. The end result is a "music-driven" process that is inherently free of a deliberately internal governing logic:

> Once I have all [the thematic] elements together, there is no method anymore. I just dive into the first cue. I go as close to chronologically as I possibly can. I don't plan or think about where the music is going to go. It really is extremely unmethodical. I tend to let the music carry itself, and I become very often surprised by it. I never question it.[2]

Elfman's general working process confirms the primacy of melodic construction and metamorphosis within his film scores, but also reveals a potential predicament concerning the application of music-centric terminology: its parallel and contrast with leitmotiv.[3] His adherence to melody as a core element to his compositional method and its intimate connection to the narrative and tone of the film suggests such melodies are truly embedded within the deeper structure of the film proper, but his free abandonment of strict adherence and willingness to break from any musico-dramatic connection weakens the notion of a true leitmotivic processes. This malleable nature of Elfman's melodic transformational processes mirrors the application of the term "leitmotiv" to film music composition, freely borrowing similar terminology from music history to describe compositional processes which may or may not be entrenched within the art. To characterize the techniques utilized in Elfman's film scores, it is necessary to establish a working definition of leitmotiv in film music in relation to—and in separation of—its frequent application to Wagnerian opera.

Establishing a definition for "filmic leitmotiv technique"

The discussion of leitmotiv in film often relies on broad, generalized definitions to discuss the application of recurring motives or themes within a film score, providing its intended audience with a

[2] Quoted in Ibid. 27-28.

[3] Throughout this chapter, the spelling used by the author will be "leitmotiv." Any quotations from sources which use the spelling "leitmotif" will be preserved as is without the (sic) designation, as both are typically considered acceptable and interchangeable.

very indiscriminate and unfocused idea of the concept. In a rather derogatory summation, Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler describe the leitmotiv as the approximation of a minimally-varied "trademark" which serves to distinguish a character, idea, or symbol within the film, and explain the device as a mere compositional tool to facilitate the writing process.[4] Kathryn Kalinak defines the term as "a musical phrase, either as complex as a melody or as simple as a few notes, which, through repetition, becomes identified with a character, situation, or idea."[5] Royal S. Brown provides minimal expansion upon Kalinak's description, describing the leitmotiv as "a musical motif, often quite brief, that over the course of a music drama (as Wagner called his operas) comes to be associated with a character, a place, a situation, a thing, or what have you. The motif often undergoes variations and modifications determined by the dramatic settings in which it appears."[6]

Claudia Gorbman echoes the significance of musical association, drawing parallels with Wagner's writings of "motifs of reminiscence" and their applicability to film music. Rather than relying on linguistic cues, however, film utilizes visual means, such as close-ups or other methods of isolating images, to establish the linkage between music and object. Gorbman stresses, though, that recall becomes fractured once its referential bond has been broken.[7] Justin London stresses the necessary accommodations film places on the musical structure of the leitmotiv, emphasizing the need for distinction within the corresponding—or competing—information from the image track and sound track. The need for brevity and coherence requires a genuine leitmotiv to be melodically and rhythmically coherent yet compact and conspicuous. An additional need is stability for recognition, for its capacity for recall despite potential deformity is essential to its character.[8] Notwithstanding the

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[4] Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (London: Continuum, 1947), 4.

[5] Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 63. Noticeably absent from Kalinak's definition is the need for any sort of development or variation, relying only on the association of thematic or motivic content.

[6] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 98.

[7] See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 28-29.

[8] See Justin London, "Leitmotifs and Musical Reference in the Classical Film Score," in *Music and Cinema*, eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 88.

need for brevity and necessary visual association, London still concedes the existence of a highly conventionalized practice of introducing two principal leitmotivic themes during main title sequences, regardless of the presence or absence of corresponding narrative tokens.

Beyond attempting to identify a parallel in music history for the technique itself from Wagnerian practices and summarizing the technique in succinct descriptions, placing film music (and film in general) as the logical successor to Wagner and the music drama served as a means to validate the film score. As early as 1910, efforts were made to connect the use of music in the silent cinema to enhance the drama or narrative as analogous to Wagner's work, providing not only accompaniment but also commentary. By interlacing music with drama, the score has a historical antecedent, rather than an arbitrary application to the images on the screen. As Caryl Flinn suggests, the connection of a leitmotiv with a narrative parallels Wagnerian practices because it becomes motivated by dramatic practices rather than musical.[9] The use of music throughout a film also served as a type of *unendliche Melodie* ("endless melody") which provided a thread of continuity throughout the disjointed visuals and intertitles unfolding before the audience.[10] Film as a medium also came to epitomize the logical inheritor of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total work of art"), with the film score situated in its rightful place through the evolution of art and drama.[11]

Whether improvised or prepared ahead of the film's presentation, the addition of music directly correlated with specific elements of the filmic narrative offered a passageway previously unobtainable to the filmgoer. Unlike a lecturer, literally speaking for the film and thus existing external to the film and its narrative, the wordless music permitted the film to speak for itself while

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[9] See Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 26). Flinn states, "Curiously, Wagner, who insisted in his theoretical writings that music played a submissive, "feminine" relation to the drama, never relegated music to a lesser or passive role in his own compositions" (26).

[10] See Ibid. 15.

[11] See Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (New York: Cambridge, 2008), 13.

simultaneously providing commentary and insight to the unfolding events.[12] The shift from establishing a general mood depicted by scene to central elements such as characters or significant objects as early as 1913 facilitated the creation of an aural hierarchy for the audience as both narrative and filming/editing techniques evolved, providing a thread of continuity through the complex unfolding web. This moved the locus of the score's logic internally, regardless of the sound source:

> What was important was the conceptual model the leitmotif provided for binding music to narrative. That is, the leitmotif served less as a practice to emulate than as a model of narrative *synchronization* . . . Synchronization through motives thus placed narrative under a hierarchy of pertinence that in the case of the leitmotif was determined by the presence (or absence) of motifs. . . . The leitmotif allowed the conceptual redefinition of synchronization under the sign of narrative integration: music could no longer be synchronized topographically to the outward, visible screen world; instead it was bound to the inner world of characters, where the mood of a place, its ambience, reflected or was determined by psychology. Music was thus "synchronized" to the drama of interiority.[13]

The organ manual prepared by Edith Lang and George West focuses on the connection of music with the mood of the narrative, providing a means of connecting theme with improvised transformations that match changes in the plot. The essential building blocks for their methodology draw from established classical repertoire with which the audience is likely familiar as a means of filling necessary moods, as well as creating original melodic lines that are brought to the fore from the outset of the film. Lang and West summarize the basic design of such thematic organization and the determinant for the number of distinct themes:

> (The main theme) should be typical in mood or character of the hero or heroine. It should have emotional appeal, it should be easily recognizable . . . This theme should be announced in the introduction, it should be emphasized

[12] See James Buhler, "Wagnerian Motives: Narrative Integration and the Development of Silent Film Accompaniment, 1908-1913," in *Wagner and Cinema*, eds. Jeongwon Joe and Sander L. Gilman (Bloomington: IUP, 2010), 30. Buhler further summarizes, "In this way, music allegorized the loss of voice as an affective value: it acknowledged the inability of the screen to speak for itself while also refusing to speak for the screen" (30).

[13] Ibid. 36.

> at the first appearance of the person with whom it is linked, and it should receive its ultimate glorification, by means of tonal volume, etc., in the finale of the film. Added to this, there will be as many subsidiary themes as there are secondary characters in the film. . . . This procedure applies only to the characters that are really concerned in the progress of the action. The villain will be characterized by a sinister or sombre (sic) theme, the comedian by a light and frivolous one, and so on.[14]

In addition to general structure for the overall film, Lang and West provide several general guidelines for manipulating the principal theme to match the evolving narrative, mirroring sound with visual and providing appropriate acoustic complement:

1. Inversion of mode—moving from major to minor when the heroine appears sorrowful or under emotional duress
2. Rhythmic separation—using rests, augmentation, diminution, or other means of rhythmic displacement to express hesitation or anxiety, particularly involved in decision making; emotional impact and source of anxiety serves as primary determinants of how rhythmic and tonal design is altered (positive emotions quicker and in major mode, negative emotions and fear in minor mode)
3. Change in register—placing principal theme in lower register if subject is in meditation or "in meditation" (not present in scene)
4. Change in meter—creating a sense of nimbleness through adjusting a duple or quadruple time theme to a triple time, or creating a sense of weightiness by inverting the process[15]

Drawing upon linguistics, Justin London emphasizes the relationship between leitmotiv and names, more specifically proper names, and their roles in designation. Through its role as a musical designator, the leitmotiv achieve three principal functions: underscore the obvious (onscreen), indicate the obscure (offscreen), and indicate the "psychological presence" from within the mind of another character.[16] Unlike proper names, however, musical leitmotivs contain the ability of emotional expression, permitting the opportunity for commentary and reflection upon the film that extends beyond the simple realm of signification. For London, this extension and entwinement into narrative

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[14] Edith Lang and George West, *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures: A Practical Manual for Pianists and Organists and an Exposition of the Principles Underlying the Musical Interpretation of Moving Pictures* (New York: Schirmer, 1920), 8.

[15] Ibid. 8-12. Lang and West provide a newly composed original theme and improvise various settings of transformations and supplemental accompaniments to depict their methodology.

[16] See Justin London, "Leitmotifs and Musical Reference in the Classical Film Score," 89.

commentary separates simple "linguistic" designation in the form of a referential cue versus a genuine leitmovic function, outlining a general process in which such separation is achieved to define filmic leitmotiv:

> First, it is established by extramusical cues that a certain motive is a referent to *X*. This same motive also has various expressive properties. Next, since the motive refers to *X*, and has certain properties, we are justified in believing that the composer thought that it was/is appropriate to associate those properties with *X*. In other words, there is a meaningful connection between *X* and its leitmotif. As a result, a leitmotif is both a reference to, as well as a statement about, X . . . Finally, in some sense, because the musical shape of the leitmotif has to remain constant (to be intelligible, presentations of the motive must be recognizable designators of *X*), every presentation of the motive is a statement, a reassertion of some property of *X*. This is so even if *X* appears in different dramatic contexts.[17]

Whether reappearing in its original form or transformed in some capacity—through orchestration, mode, etc.—yet still containing some recognizable shape of the original leitmotiv, the musical figure retains its inherent bond with its token and, thus, with the narrative.

Matthew Bribitzer-Stull builds further upon London's three general guidelines for filmic leitmotiv. Not simply connected to the narrative and contributing to the commentary of the unfolding events, a leitmotiv must be entrenched to music-specific processes as well, actively engaged in the larger unfolding structure of the musical unit as a unique entity. Bribitzer-Stull offers three necessary conditions for a musical figure to achieve potential "leitmotivic" status that goes beyond simply narrative contribution but delves into the crux of Wagnerian leitmotiv, a working out within musicological processes in addition to (and/or simultaneously with) the narratological connection:

1. Leitmotifs are bifurcated in nature, comprising both a musical physiognomy and an emotional association.
2. Leitmotifs are developmental in nature, evolving to reflect and create new musico-dramatic contexts.
3. Leitmotifs contribute to and function within a larger musical structure.[18]

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[17] Ibid. 90.

[18] Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Cambridge, 2015), 10.

Through initial visual and narrative establishment and its subsequent repetition to serve as its confirmation of significance, leitmotivs achieve further meaning through development and transformation as the drama unfolds, and it is this more direct relation to the process of evolution on a musico-narrative level that Bribitzer-Stull bases his definition of leitmotivity. As he describes, "Leitmotifs, as opposed to other kinds of associative themes, are not dicent signs, musical nouns as it were. But the *types of thematic developments* they undergo *can* be understood as dicent; in fact, that is the essence of my argument, that the ways in which Wagner transforms his themes have something concrete and definite to say about their musico-dramatic contexts."[19] These processes outlined by Bribitzer-Stull include various alterations of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, formal, textural, and narrative adjustments with corresponding consequences to the musico-dramatic design:

1. **Thematic Mutation**—minute alterations without radical alterations of associational significance
    a. *Change of Mode*—shifting from major to parallel minor (or vice versa), used to express duality of joy, goodness, light versus corruption, evil, and darkness
    b. *Harmonic Corruption*—chromatic modification/intensification of theme to reflect perversion, usually along degree of continuum
    c. *Thematic Truncation*—abrupt stoppage of associative theme, creating phenomenological jarring
    d. *Thematic Fragmentation*—dissection of theme into constituent motives, often further developed, to display the entrance or exit of influence or character
    e. *Change of Texture*—modifications in density, dynamic, articulation, register, orchestration, or tempo, but rarely signal nature of transformation
2. **Thematic Evolution**—substantial alterations of a higher order of significance, usually during scene changes, that contain "life cycles" of themes (birth, growth, decay) to supply needs of non-present visual storyline
3. **Contextual Reinterpretation**—dramatic recontextualization responsible for establishing associativity; "describe dramatic developments in terms of musical rationales"[20]
    a. *Associative Transposition*—tonal centers achieving extramusical relationships, either on a chordal or tonal level
    b. *Thematic Complexes*—linear and/or vertical fusion of two distinct themes that forms and functions its own leitmotiv itself

[19] Ibid. 169, emphasis in original.

[20] Ibid. 195

c. *Thematic Irony*—contradiction or incongruity between the original connotation of leitmotiv and a dramatic context, forcing recontextualization[21]

Within Bribitzer-Stull's text, a more formalized series of definitions is presented that differentiates between distinctly musical terms and their interrelated elements that often create inexact parallels, degrees of narrative interconnectivity between musical units and related transformative processes, and a variable scale of associativity as an umbrella, within which "leitmotivity" can be viewed as a specialized but unique process. Filmic leitmotiv undoubtedly draws from a source of influence in Wagnerian music drama, but the degree, much like Bribitzer-Stull's spectrum, must be reconsidered before applying the term to a film's thematic content before application.

A confluence and disparity of terminology, and assuaging the conundrum

Much like the issues surrounding the diegetic/nondiegetic divide for the location of film music with respect to the location of film music discussed in Chapter 1, the implications of employing "leitmotiv" technique faces significant terminological issues from both music- and nonmusic-centric circles. By viewing the motion picture as the natural successor to Wagnerian stage drama, the tendency to preserve terminology is overwhelming, and the desire of discourse focusing on music to uphold the exact vocabulary from the supposed paragon of the style achieves the similar consequences of Claudia Gorbman's integration of literary theory into film music dialogue. As Neumeyer and Buhler caution, however, such a prejudice misses the function of music for film, stating, "The film music scholar needs to be vigilant against inherent biases in analytical tools that were developed to study absolute (instrumental) music rather than programmatic music or music for the stage."[22]

Although Lang and West emphasize the significance of establishing a principal theme for central character(s) relevant to the plot, the overwhelming core of their text focuses on the articulation

[21] This summary is drawn from Ibid. 170-208. The categories outlined and the definitions and analyses associated with each are also connected with his 2001 dissertation.

[22] David Neumeyer and James Buhler, "Analytical and Interpretitive Approaches (I)," in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. K. J. Donnelly, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 19.

of the general mood of the film rather than specific elements entwined within the narrative. The prose of their manual also reveals two common complaints of early application of supposed leitmotivic approach to film music, weakening the supposed bonds to the genuine music processes. The authors strive to connect the formal design and development of film music to previously established models within classical music, specifically the sonata form. Additionally, Lang and West presuppose the inherent connection between film and opera, assuming the link between screen and stage and enforcing the genre as the logical predecessor; in so doing, film music, whether created artificially through improvisation or organized through predetermined cue sheets by production companies, is unnaturally elevated to the level of the symphony and opera hall. As Lang and West reflect, "Nothing can give a better idea of what good moving picture music should be, than the careful study of successful operas. Therein the welding of action and music is so close, that they cannot be separated; the musical characterization amounts to a labelling of each singer with a pertinent phrase or motive."[23]

Beyond the considerable efforts to establish film music within the same lineage of its concert and operatic forerunners, Lang and West's text makes no explicit mention of "leitmotiv" itself, referring only to their methodology with respect to theme and the *association* of excerpts with specific moods. Noticeably absent from the prose is Wagner's name or any specific reference to his compositions or his writings and his theories or compositional aesthetics, further softening the notion of the genuine connection between the practices film scoring and classical works. Wagnerian influence seems further muted when viewing the catalog of appropriate repertoire examples as well; of the 209 specific examples divided into fourteen different moods, examples from Wagner appear only seven times within four categories, one of the least represented individuals within the collection who appears at least once.[24] Five years later, Erno Rapee makes a far more concerted effort to establish the direct link between film music and Wagner and leitmotiv, creating an indelible bond and establishing a terminological forge for analytical an compositional discourse. Rapee asserts, "[I]t was Richard Wagner who established the fundamental principles of the music drama of today and it is his work which

[23] Lang and West, *Musical Accompaniment for Moving Pictures*, 6.

[24] For the complete repertoire list within the manual, see Ibid. 27-30.

typifies to the greatest extent and in the minutest detail the accompanying of action with music. His method of investing each one of his characters with a certain motive, called "Leit Motiv" (sic) and applying this motive at every appearance of the character, but in different shadings to suit the surrounding conditions, is the one which can best be applied in scoring pictures."[25] This terminological alteration from opera to specifically "music drama" serves to strengthen the parallels to the work and terminology of Wagnerian methodology—while simultaneously opening a Pandora's Box for analytical criticism.

Though incorporating contemporary techniques of harmony, counterpoint, rhythmic/metric complexity, and orchestration and timbre, the style and aesthetic of film music by the mid-twentieth century often remained firmly entrenched in the practices in the outdated models of the Romantic idiom, bordering on the cliché for some critics. For Frederick Sternfeld, the use of leitmotiv as an organizational structure is more restrictive in nature, prohibiting composers from exploring modernity and flexibility and greatly inhibiting the potential organic growth of the genre as a whole. Its efficacy is best measured through its constraint, with narrative coherence serving as the critical determinant for the use of thematic content; its frequent overuse, however, leads to mechanistic boredom and monotony.[26] It is this necessity of thematic parsimony, Sternfeld argues, that is the foundation of the art form and the separating factor from music for the concert hall, especially when new material is introduced into the total fabric of the score:

> Here, the inherent laws of an art that lives in time dictate the procedure, for such episodes must be *recreated in time*, in order to become an organic part of the total fabric. Yet, such recapture must not destroy the impress of freshness and novelty on ear and mind. The restatement can succeed only by a rare sense of timing and by the utmost economy.[27]

The application of themes to characters in abundance by Max Steiner and film composers of the 1930s and 1940s appears less connected to the stylistic tendencies of Wagner and more directly

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[25] Erno Rapee, *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures* (New York: Belwin, 1925), 8.

[26] See Frederick W. Sternfeld, "Music and the Feature Films," *The Musical Quarterly*, 33, 4 (Oct. 1947), 521.

[27] Ibid. 528.

correlated to other composers of the theater, outside the processes of Wagnerian music drama. In such cases, reminiscence and associative themes and motives become far more applicative for design than the terminology of Wagner. Moreover, the composition and production process may significantly alter the original composition, leaving the composer's original work and its connection to the narrative interpreted through a different lens than initially intended. Such malformations result in a separation between compositional and filmic narrative, creating a disjuncture which "operates in the changing arena of cultural signification."[28]

Adorno and Eisler continued the challenge of oversaturation of melodic identification and also challenged the genuine connection between "filmic leitmotiv" and the authentic characteristics associated with Wagnerian music drama. Beyond the abundance of themes within films, however, the nature of films in contrast to music drama does not permit the leitmotiv to achieve its effectiveness or intent. Unlike the stage, which preserves a simulacrum of continuity, the motion picture consists of continuous disruptions of various elements with the unceasing change of scenes. Because of this natural limitation which necessitates brevity, Adorno and Eisler argue, "[c]inema music . . . has no need of leitmotifs to serve as signposts, and its limited dimension does not permit of adequate expansion of the leitmotif."[29]

More significant for Adorno and Eisler, however, is film's depiction of reality—a capacity which naturally inhibits the leitmotiv's endowment with metaphysical significance. Because the leitmotiv cannot be assumed within the symbolic makeup of the film on the level of the music drama, it can become nothing more than a "musical lackey" that only proclaims the arrival of its associated figure. Adorno and Eisler summarize, "[t]he effective technique of the past thus becomes a mere

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[28] Stephen C. Meyer, "'Leitmotif': On the Application of a Word to Film Music," *Journal of Film Music*, 5, 1-2 (2012), 107. Meyer explores this separation of compositional intent and the resultant filmic product in an analysis of Miklós Rózsa's score for *Ben-Hur* (1959).

[29] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, 5.

duplication, ineffective and uneconomical. At the same time, it cannot be developed to its full musical significance in the motion picture, its use leads to extreme poverty of composition."[30]

James Buhler builds upon this separation from myth, critical of Adorno and Eisler while still emphasizing the issues surrounding the application of applying Wagnerian terminology to film music discourse. As Buhler summarizes, "Where film simply takes the signifying function of the leitmotif at face value, severing its link to myth as it were, Wagner uses the leitmotif to put signification, the language-like character of music, into play. … [T]he 'primal baptism' linking the leitmotif as signifier with a signified often fails in Wagner's dramas as the motif refers to music again, absorbed into the musical unfolding."[31] Because it serves primarily in the role of designator, leitmotiv in film music frequently becomes "secularized" in the overall scope of filmic (and Wagnerian) narrative expression:

> Film typically deploys leitmotifs in a much more consistent manner than does Wagner; the motifs are much more rigidly bound to the action in film, and they are consequently rarely granted the independence motifs have in Wagner's dramas, which is one reason the music in cinema rarely obtains the level of independence in Wagner's dramas. A leitmotif in film is seldom allowed to arrest the cinematic flow for a summarizing statement of a motif as Wagner halts the dramatic flow to make way for a statement of his motif. While the filmic deployment of leitmotifs thus serves as a critique of Wagner's mythical impulses, it also serves as the utmost development of the least musical (because most linguistic) aspect of Wagner's compositional thought.[32]

Much contemporary criticism continues this focus on the distinct terminological differences between genuine Wagnerian practices and the techniques found in film music, arguing that the use of terminology is an inaccurate misappropriation of similar but discrete methodologies. Bribitzer-Stull identifies the leitmotiv as related to—but separate from—referential themes that have appeared

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[30] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, 5-6.

[31] James Buhler, "*Star Wars*, Music, and Myth," in *Music and Cinema*, eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 41.

[32] Ibid. 32.

throughout compositional practices, including reminiscence motives, motto themes, musical symbolism, and other processes of musical recall. Leitmotiv is but one approach under the larger umbrella of "associative themes," separated from its counterparts through its entwinement in development as both a musical and a dramatic device.[33] Buhler further acknowledges that music during the silent film period could not fully substitute or transcend the absence of vocal silence but only underscore it, creating a similar but non-identical reflection to Wagner's operatic devices.[34]

Scott Paulin likewise emphasizes the identification of film music in Wagnerian terms as through analogy rather than parallel process, its inclusion not of necessity but of convenience. Moreover, the use of "leitmotiv" as a term from Wagnerian practices to describe the technique within film music never embraced the malleability of the definition or compositional tendencies found in Wagner's writings or music, leaving the term as an outsider from historical standards. As Paulin describes, "Musical accompaniment itself, however, which most often—if not inevitably—would have been present in some form during the projection of any such cinematic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, is assigned no contributive role here in the production of aesthetic effect. This analogy was thus an early step in appropriating Wagner's concept and detaching it from its original context . . . It also thereby ignores the changes in Wagner's thought on the relationship of music to drama . . ."[35] It is when film is interpreted as the logical successor of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* that film music's leitmotivic nature is most problematic in Paulin's interpretation, placing his heaviest criticism on the writings of Rapee and the initial establishments of music with mood and action.

Central to the concept of the Wagnerian leitmotiv is the articulation of the psychological drama, and the dovetailing of music with overall mood would only run parallel to the narrative rather

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[33] Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif*, 10. This use of a narrowed classification for leitmotiv within a larger context of associative themes marks a change in Bribitzer-Stull's previous approach.

[34] See Buhler, "Wagnerian Motives," 38-39.

[35] Scott Paulin, "Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music," in *Music and Cinema*, eds. James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover, NH: Weston University Press, 2000), 64-65.

than genuine integration. Such generalization and stock themes, particularly through preestablished excerpts, prohibited the individuality and unique organicism inherent—and required—for the genuine *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[36] In this atmospheric setting espoused by Rapee, as well as Lang and West five years prior, Paulin notes that "musical elements chosen can have no more than a casual relationship to the film; they are not integrally connected as would be the elements of Wagner's ideal *Gesamtkunstwerk*."[37] The development of more explicitly thematic techniques, such as those used by Max Steiner in the beginning of the 1930s, are not without inherent difficulties to the genuine Wagnerian approach as well. Mimicking the criticisms of Adorno and Eisler from fifty years earlier, Paulin summarizes that such direct linkage and overuse of thematic pairing with visual cuing leaves the theme hollow in meaning, becoming nothing more than an aural echo with nothing distinctive to contribute.[38] Nevertheless, film as a total medium—including its music—cannot achieve the Wagnerian ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, at least from a film music perspective; Paulin concludes that ultimately there is an "inability to create music (especially if one is improvising it on the spot) that supports both essential unities: of film and music in mutual relation, and internally within a strictly musical structure. . . . Music is never conceived as the driving force behind film drama but rather as responding to and supporting the narrative. Internal structural continuity of music always cedes importance to the continuity and mutual reinforcement of the music/image relationship."[39] Its reactive status, rather than proactive

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[36] See Ibid. 68. Paulin describes, "The meaning of the motif may be unclear or seem to change across the course of the drama, but it presents itself, even draws attention to itself, as an integral part of the motivic web of a unique, auratic artwork. It could not simply be replaced by another combination of notes without altering the putative *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a whole . . ." (68).

[37] Ibid. 69.

[38] See Ibid. 72. It is important to stress that Paulin is also critical of Adorno's and Eisler's position, feeling that such disregard for music's emotive qualities misses a crucial component in favor of criticizing the technique as a whole. Paulin remarks, "[I]n its presence (or absence), music inevitably inflects the visual field in some way. The very use of music conveys a message about film's self-imputed status as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and plays a role in legitimating it qua art. Music's ability to lull an audience into uncritical emotional involvement in and identification with a film, however ideologically problematic, is an augmenting function that cannot be reduced to a relation of mere redundancy to image and drama" (72-73).

[39] Ibid. 74.

involvement, keeps music from ever achieving genuine leitmotivic status regardless of compositional technique or similarity.

The nature of musical structures and application of such terminology reveals further complications when applying leitmotivic analogies to film music analysis. Bribitzer-Stull outlines crucial musical components which necessitate the identification of a musical entity as "thematic:"

> It seems, first and foremost, that in order to identify and list it, a theme—any theme—must be recognizable. That is, it must be heard as a unique entity, differentiated from its musical context, and significant enough to elicit notice. To do so, a theme must employ (and retain) a variety of identifiable musical parameters. These may include, but are not limited to: contour, rhythmic content, pitch content, length, orchestration, texture, register, tempo, harmonic progression, harmonic function, and contrapuntal framework. Of all parameters, though, the one that establishes significance the most forcefully is *repetition*.[40]

In using the general concept of "theme," the potential size for a musical unit becomes a variable window whose malleability becomes a double edged sword. The tendency to associate theme and leitmotiv with a melody, especially stemming from Max Steiner and the practices of the 1930s and 1940s, creates more discrepancy than parallel in terms of terminological clarity. While melodies tend to be more salient and foreground-based musical structures (appropriate for identification with general audiences), themes tend to encompass a greater degree of musical boundaries and have a deeper, more overarching evolutionary process.[41] Likewise, the use of phrases as a means to define themes becomes problematic; while similarly interrelated (as with melody), theme and phrase are not codependent, as theme relies on cognitive recognition as opposed to the formal organization upon which phrases are contingent.[42] For Bribitzer-Stull, the closest term which meets the needs for thematic identification

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[40] Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif*, 34.

[41] See Ibid. 45. Rather than producing a definition of "melody," Bribitzer-Stull traces the development of its differentiation from theme, producing a continuum among the interrelated terms.

[42] See Ibid. 41.

and design is "motive," especially for its potential brevity in identification and flexibility in transformations.

Aside from the issues of definition, focusing on a strictly Wagnerian approach negates the historical antecedents which predate Wagner, as well as genres outside the music drama which may better describe the musico-dramatic processes of the associative thematic score in film. In addition to the grand concept of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the influences of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources of operetta, salon music, and incidental music have connections to film largely through the use of *spoken* dialogue with musical underscoring, rather than a consistent musical continuity.[43] Moreover, earlier composers whose work had marked influence on Wagner and the subsequent development of the more refined leitmotiv technique, especially Carl Maria von Weber's 1821 opera *Der Freischütz*, remain largely absent in discourse. The differences between film and opera as mediums also merit the need to separate the oft-stated correlation between the two art forms:

> [M]usical composition intended for a specific dramatic moment in a given film virtually never predates the existence of the film. Such is not the case in opera, where some composers—like Wagner, who wrote his own libretti—conceived of musical and dramatic ideas simultaneously. Opera composers also have a great deal more control over the length of their music . . . Most importantly, it is a myth to think of the film score as a composer's medium. . . . The upshot of these differences is the real impact in terms of musical form, tonality and thematic development. Extended or deep-level formal, tonal, and thematic processes are almost impossible to achieve in film music. The sort of motivic, harmonic, and tonal parallelisms . . . would be almost unthinkable in a film score. Likewise, the complex network of leitmotifs or of associative tonality that exist in Wagner's *Ring* would require a film series of mammoth proportions.[44]

The end result is a grand stereotype that blurs distinction, with nuanced definitions lost in favor of the proximal analogy of a premier model regardless of genuine parallels.

Associativity ultimately serves as an umbrella term, and a distinction can be drawn between reminisce (or associative) theme and Wagnerian leitmotiv, placing the concepts along a variable range

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[43] See Ibid. 260.

[44] Ibid. 262-63.

that utilizes Bribitzer-Stull's three criteria for leitmotiv (musical physiognomy/emotional association, developing new musico-dramatic contexts, contribution to larger musical structure) as a means of separation. While film music may undoubtedly draw from and/or utilize Wagnerian concepts and compositional processes, the terminology utilized in analytical discourse can be more reflective of historical antecedents that also predate Wagner. Melodic transformative techniques can be identified with respect to both their musical qualities on a micro and a macro level as well as their link to narrative, and the term "leitmotiv," within Bribitzer's classification system, can be reserved for the premiere examples which achieve the highest levels of associativity and developmental maturity on a musical, emotional, and narratological level.

Associativity within and across narrative archetypes in Burtonian filmworlds

Identifying Elfman's relationship to "leitmotiv technique" in connection to the wide-ranging, generalized definition incorporated in film music discourse or the specific practices aligned with the techniques espoused by definitive Wagnerian-centric analyses produces a wide array of results which confirm and conflict both definitions. The majority of Elfman's thematic construction and design leans closer to the pre-1930s aesthetic prior to Max Steiner, minimizing the number of central themes (or corollary themes not explicitly drawn from this prime material) to within three distinct "leitmotivs" or less. From these central themes, the vast majority of material from the score is drawn from the fundamental theme(s) and their variation and deconstruction. Halfyard suggests, "[M]any of (Elfman's) scores fall into a pattern of having a principal, unifying theme found in the main title and dominating the score thereafter; and a secondary theme, which may be used only occasionally for a contrasting narrative idea that works against the main tone of the film and its corresponding theme."[45]

The transformative processes applied to Elfman's principal leitmotivs may or may not align with distinct narratological events within each individual film, and the techniques mirror many of the suggestions outlined in improvisation manuals that have reached into the realm of cliché for some

[45] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 29.

critics. Inversions of theme typically represent "inversions of narrative," reflecting a sudden change in emotional and/or physical state for the character associated with the theme. Modality is most generally reserved for psychological or emotional states, with the addition of dissonance frequently reflecting the accumulation of psychological tension or turmoil within the character. Fragmentation of motives often serves to develop a non-narrative ostinato, serving little more than preserving a memorable token of a character that may or may not be present before the filmgoer as the scene unfolds.

Instrumentation achieves some of the greatest diversity for both mood and character as well as, at times, motive and theme itself; sonic identity for narrative association is frequently incorporated by Elfman through instrumental parallels. Similar to the Martian invaders and their connection to the theremin, individuals which share similar character traits share timbral identities within or across filmic narratives. Examples including children or child-like adults with the celesta and choir (either children's or women's), such as the adolescently-minded protagonist of *Edward Scissorhands*, the "past Alice" theme depicting a six-year-old hero in *Alice in Wonderland*, and childhood flashbacks of Ichabod Crane in *Sleepy Hollow*; Frankenstein-like adult inventors with tubas or bass trombones, used in both *Edward Scissorhands* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*; percussion, especially low-pitched membranophones, for the militaristic apes greatly separated from humanity in *Planet of the Apes*; sinuous violins for chaotic mischief, such as the titular character in *Beetlejuice* and Catwoman in *Batman Returns*; and the use of sleigh bells for snow, seen in the prologue of *Batman Returns* as well as throughout *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. As Elfman readily admits, it is the logical processes of the music itself, rather than the inherent narrative reasoning, that may be the ultimate determinant in the presence or absence of central themes, suggesting that strict application of "Wagnerian leitmotiv" definitions are greatly weakened when compared to associative themes: "I never resist those things. . . . If it works, I don't question why."[46] Halfyard further summarizes, "[A]lthough Elfman's compositional use of . . . theme

[46] Quoted in Ibid. 28. Elfman is discussing his score to *Sleepy Hollow*, and the two central themes to the film: the "Headless Horseman" and "Ichabod Crane" themes. Although both are separated by character and time, as Ichabod's theme deals with his repressed memories of his mother's murder, there are numerous instances where Ichabod's theme would appear

demonstrates that he is aware of this intuitively, he clearly does not feel the need to articulate these ideas at a conscious level. As a composer, Elfman knows what does and does not work: even when he is surprised by the results and does not entirely understand them, he is happy to trust his instincts and leave analysis to the analysts."[47]

Elfman's practices and self-descriptions to compositional methodology reveal both an adherence to and avoidance of a leitmotivic approach when using the restrictive terminology outlined above. If embracing the criteria delineated by Bribitzer-Stull, the thematic construction and manipulation of central ideas would fall under the umbrella category of "associative themes," but the free disconnect from narrative to form ostinati or other supplemental figures outside thematic devices gravitates towards symbolic and reminiscence definitions rather than strictly leitmotivic as a definitive, governing principle. When viewed through this terminological prism, the overwhelming description of Elfman's compositional procedure within his Burton film scores is best described as utilizing associative themes as a primary organizing structure, outlining central melodies for characters or elements within the narrative and manipulating these materials within the core of the film score for identification purposes as the primary factor, with narrative a contributing—but not mandatory—factor for the presence or absence of thematic material. The key quality of its typical connection—rather than its *essential* relationship—to narrative leaves it occasionally short of the genuine leitmotiv.

What makes Elfman's music so exceptional when paired with Burton's films, however, is the thread of continuity between narratives across Burton's films. Whether drawing from original stories and creations or taking outside source material and adapting to his directorial and narrative style, Burton's films carry several characteristics that can be found consistently within the visual aspects and the diegesis of his works, creating parallels and a sense of a "Burtonian filmworld" that runs through the majority of his repertoire. Tim Burton's films include many or all of the following aspects, creating a distinct thumbprint for the auteur: subverting conventions within filmic genres, visual aesthetics

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over shots of the Headless Horseman. Rather than manipulating the moment, Elfman would generally keep Ichabod's theme present, greatly weakening the narrative connotation between individual theme and character.

[47] Ibid. 29.

drawn from 1950s-1960s and low-budget horror films, extensive use of stripes and swirls drawn from personal artistry, facets of gothic and grotesque in both visual and diegetic settings, Dr. Frankenstein-inspired inventors and sophisticated machination, complex relationships with or general apathy of authority figures, social outcasts and youthful anguish, and melancholy character origins often involving absent or deceased parental figures.[48]

It is through this lens of a Burtonian filmworld that associativity can be discussed not only within but also across filmic narrative on a rarified level. Such a possibility to observe consistent, characteristic thematic gestures with respect to narrative and correlated musico-dramatic qualities affords the potential for associative and/or "leitmotivic" techniques that can span multiple films but remain within a respective diegetic space. Just as Burton's films contain several recurring themes in visual and plot, Elfman's accompanying scores frequently contain sonic signatures which echo these monikers.

Parallels of Pee-Wee and Jack Skellington: The Burtonian Dreamer and Inventor

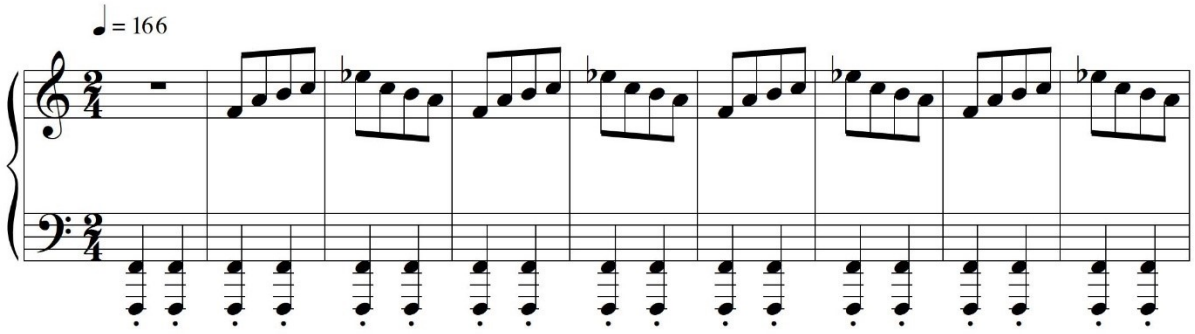
Utilized especially during the early period of Elfman's compositional period when scoring Burton's films (1985-1993), a descending, primarily chromatic, melodic line is often paired with a protagonist who is in pursuit of some token object or fantasy, a "dreamer" lost within their surrounding reality. Such a metaphorical gesture is reminiscent of Juan Chattah's Qualitative Iconic Metaphor (QIM) of MOTION IN VERTICAL SPACE IS FLUCTUATION IN PITCH FREQUENCY, where physical ascents in vertical space correlate with upward motion in pitch frequency and downward physical trajectories are commonly paired with descending pitch frequencies.[49] Rather than relating directly with the physical spaces of the setting, however, Elfman's use of such contours correlates more typically with character and metaphorical/psychological space. Descending, often chromatic lines tend to "fall towards" the protagonist, leading to an introspective pathway to character and diegesis. Ascending gestures invert

[48] Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc, *The Pocket Essential Tim Burton* (Harpenden: Oldcastle, 2005), 14-19.

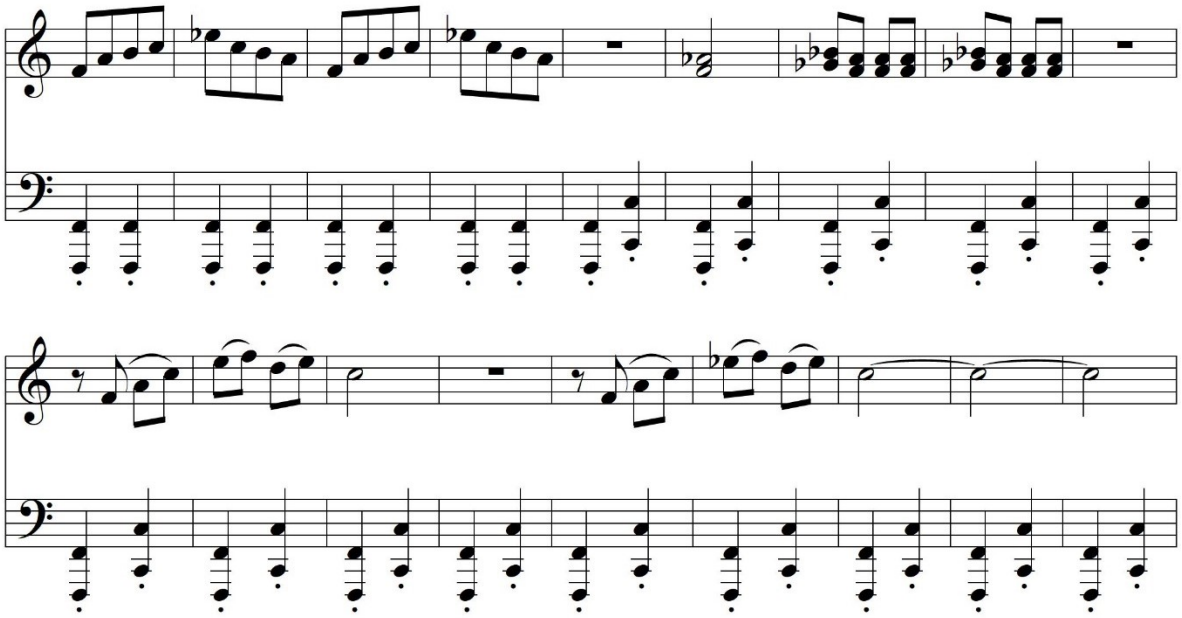
[49] See Juan Roque Chattah, "Semiotics, Pragmatics, and Metaphor in Film Music Analysis," (Ph. D. dissertation, Florida State University, 2013), 29.

the process, becoming more accompaniment and resulting in perceived outward projections of the protagonist's dreams and nightmares. Facilitating this inversion of contour is an inversion of register, with the descending gesture typically located in higher-voiced melodic lines at least in its initial introduction and ascending motions shifting to bass voices. This pattern tends to be arrhythmic and rely on general contour, using the associativic relationship internal/external mental pathways and landscapes.

Though the overall thematic organization between the two films is drastically different, the protagonists from *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* (Pee-Wee Herman) and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (Jack Skellington) are intimately bonded Burtonian narrative archetypes through this compositional process. The jovial and light-hearted main titles to *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* insinuate the childish dreamer through both instrumentation and the descending figure (see Example 2.1, Figure 2.1). Utilizing an all-black background with white text throughout almost the entire title sequence, the initial entry into the filmworld provides the filmgoer little information about the protagonist from a visual perspective, relying on Elfman's score to define the character and help shape the preliminary narrative foray. The first melodic line played by the saxophone combines elements of both the descending diatonic and lydian-mixolydian scales, creating a nearly-complete chromatic descent from the tonic to dominant in the opening phrase.



Music Example 2.1. Transcription of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "Main Titles" [0:00:00 – 0:00:20].



Music Example 2.1, continued.

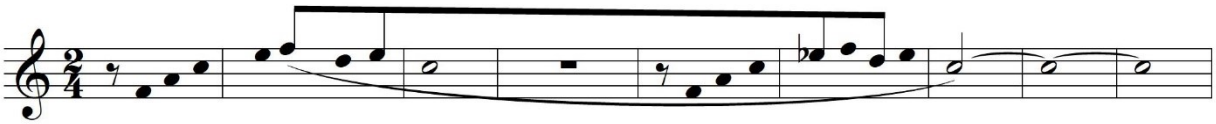
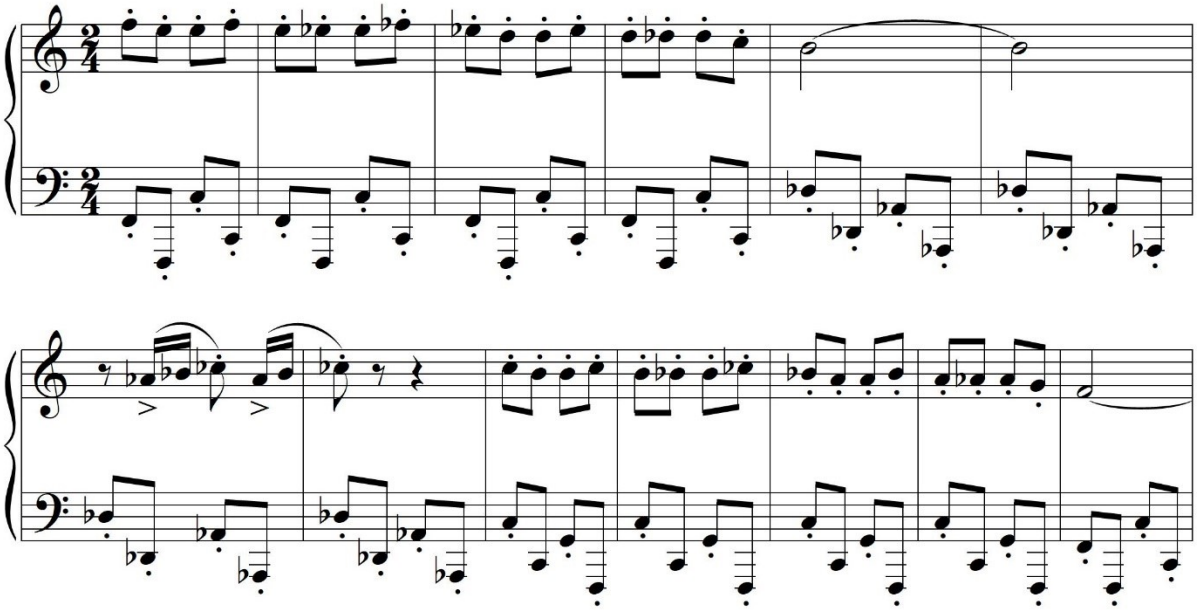


Figure 2.1. Descending chromatic outline of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "Main Titles," first theme.

The first appearance of the film title, showing over the music presented in Example 2.2, confirms both Pee-Wee's juvenile nature as well as the significance of a descending chromatic line to his character identification. The vibrant, colorful text—the only moment of where white is not used—is matched with a change in instrumentation as the trumpet announces the second half of the initial theme, using a nearly entire chromatic line that spans an octave and pauses briefly at the tritone.

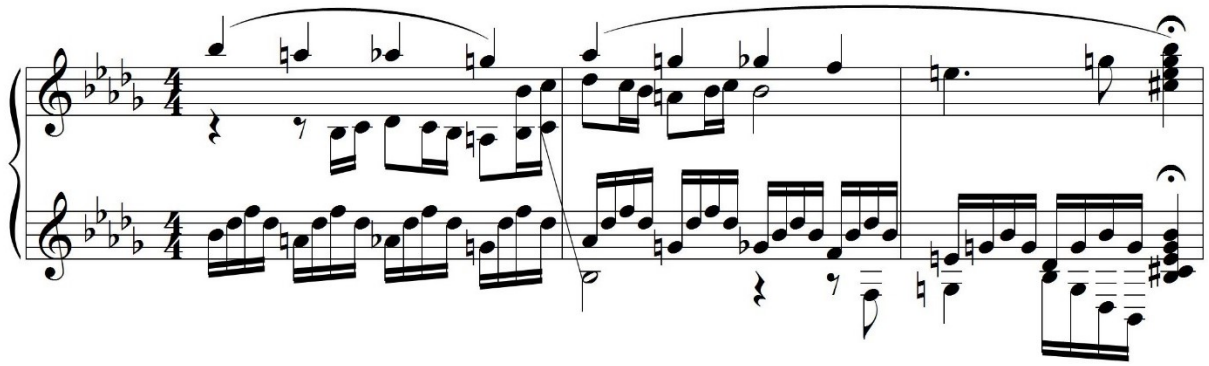


Music Example 2.2. Transcription of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "Main Titles" [0:00:21 – 0:00:30].

The combination of the two melodic segments realize the missing visual elements of the filmworld, intimating traits of the protagonist before his first appearance. Moreover, the grand reveal of Pee-Wee following the main titles only serves to confirm the Burtonian dreamer character trait. The black veil gives way to a still of an Eiffel Tower billboard on a picturesque day, ultimately zooming out to reveal a collection of racers on the home stretch on the final day of the Tour de France. Pee-Wee makes his grand entrance through the pack of riders, seizing his opportunity to take the lead on his beloved bicycle as the group closes in on the finish line, where Pee-Wee arrives alone on the final straightaway to win the race—set to the sounds of a descending diatonic scale spanning an octave. Claiming victory in the greatest cycling competition in the world, Pee-Wee is ushered to the winners circle to receive his crown among a throng of supporters and photographers, but his moment is interrupted by an unseen ringing noise. The spectators scatter and celebration dissolves into a much more tranquil image of Pee-Wee lying peacefully in his bed, smiling gleefully as he remains mentally enraptured in his dream world. Much of the score dissipates as well, leaving only a music box effect continuing a descending contour motive. After his initial flutter of eyes, Pee-Wee's first cognizant

motion, a look to his right brings an end to this descending motivic figure, signaling the break from his dream-like state and separating the filmgoer from his dreamworld.

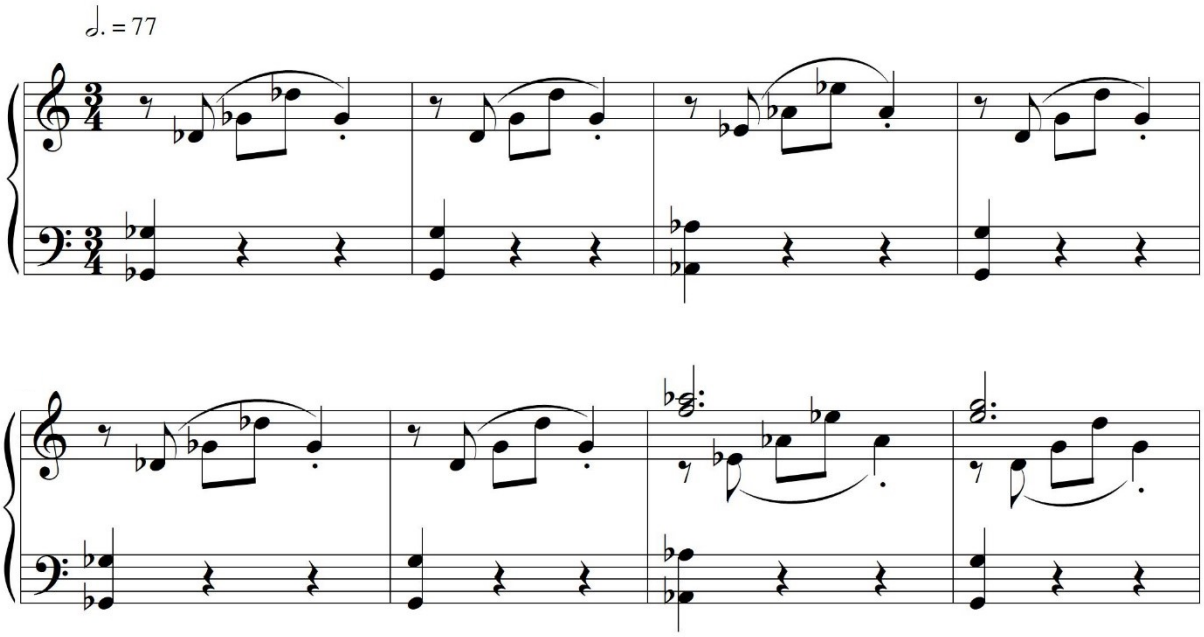
While the opening title sequence and first scene of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* serve as an expression and identification of the Burtonian dreamer in a literal sense, the connection of the contour technique with Jack Skellington in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is generally more metaphorical. The Pumpkin King's first appearance depicts Jack in the midst of another Halloween celebration, receiving the accolades of his fellow citizens and the Mayor for all of his efforts in setting up the festivities. Despite the apparent success of another holiday season and the unbridled adulation of his peers, the monotony of Halloween has worn thin on him. As Jack wanders aimlessly through the graveyard, a descending chromatic line appears in the violin, accompanied by arpeggiations in the mallets and an oscillating figure shared among the woodwinds (see Example 2.3). This use of the descending chromatic dreamer motive prefaces Jack's soliloquy as he begins to explore the unexplained hollow feeling within his soul contrary to the evidently successful holiday season, identifying that his heart and his mind are vested elsewhere and foreshadowing his eventual pursuit of that missing emotion.



Music Example 2.3. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Lament" [0:06:34 – 0:06:48].

While descending motion typically provides the introspective pathway to the Burtonian dreamer, the inversion of this motive exposes the sense of dreaming to reality before the filmgoer and protagonist. Paired with this inversion of contour is typically an inversion of register, allowing the motive to grow from the musical depths of the character's subconscious. For Pee-Wee Herman, it

manifests itself most notably in the evil clown nightmare sequence, the opening of which is provided in Example 2.4.[50] Employed in a much shorter form, the ascent contains only three pitches before reaching its peak and turning around, creating a four-note swell that forms the foundation for the majority of Pee-Wee's musical nightmare. Giving additional bearing to the sense of the rising direction for the cue is the use of arpeggios, stretching the general intervallic size of the of the motive but obscuring its brevity by emphasizing its trajectory.[51]



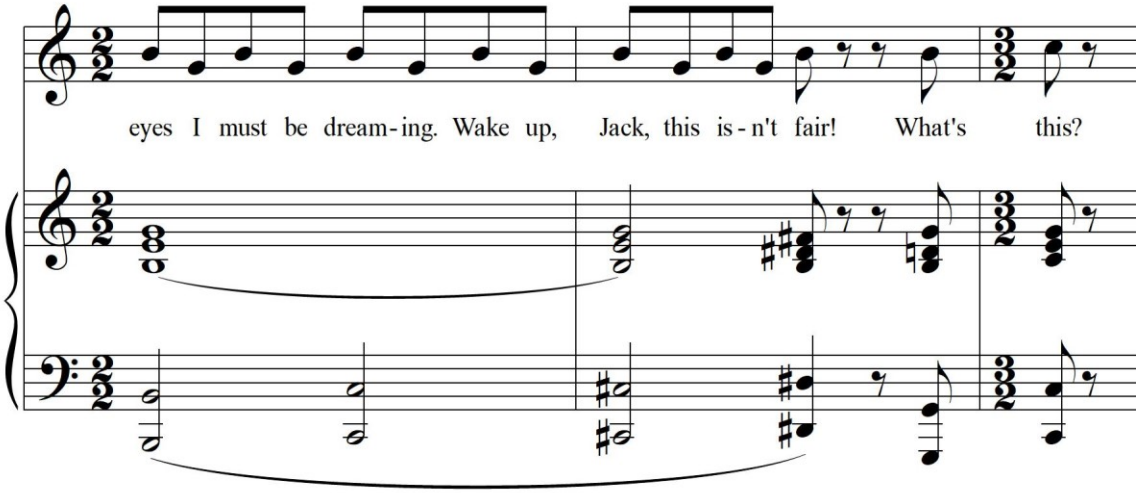
Music Example 2.4. Transcription of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "Clown Dream" [1:06:46 – 1:06:52].

Jack Skellington's outward expression of his dream is achieved far more literally for both himself and the filmgoer, as he is fully conscious and is questioning his faculties throughout "What's

[50] This is not the first nightmare involving the destruction of Pee-Wee's beloved bicycle, but the previous dream sequence is influenced by the appearance of a Tyrannosaurus, harking back to both the dinosaur skeletons used in the breakfast machine from the beginning of the film and the sculpture outside the dinosaur museum from which he recently escaped. Because a visual association had already been established between a dinosaur and a position of power and superiority, the second melodic idea of "The Breakfast Machine" (discussed below) returns as an associative theme, presented in a more sinister and dissonant setting to match the atmosphere.

[51] What greatly differentiates this scene and gesture from the sense of oscillation to be discussed below is the abundance of apreggiations that exaggerate the upwards trajectory, even when the bass line changes directions and begins its descent. This use of arpeggios to facilitate an ascending melodic curve, rather than an overall arch design, is not seen in the general oscillating pattern and thus gives more credence to the figure being related to the external projection of psychological states, rather than the scientific/"inventor" design.

This?" After arriving in Christmas Town and realizing its inversional relationship to his home world, Jack probes both his surroundings and his alertness, believing himself to be vividly dreaming this new world (see Example 2.5). The literal calls to himself to awaken from this state of disbelief will go unanswered as, unlike Pee-Wee, he is not observing from his subconscious, but rather an objective reality. It is only at the end of the song that Jack realizes his observations are not a dream and that his pursuit to find its meaning will begin; previous statements of the ascending "exposing dream" line have appeared underneath prolonged tonic chords, creating chromatic (nonfunctional) passing motion in the bass, while the final ascending pitches are involved in changes of harmony that become part of a cadential progression leading to the half cadence. By achieving a functional role instead of a static accompaniment, Jack is preparing to enact his dream and manufacture its potential into a reality.

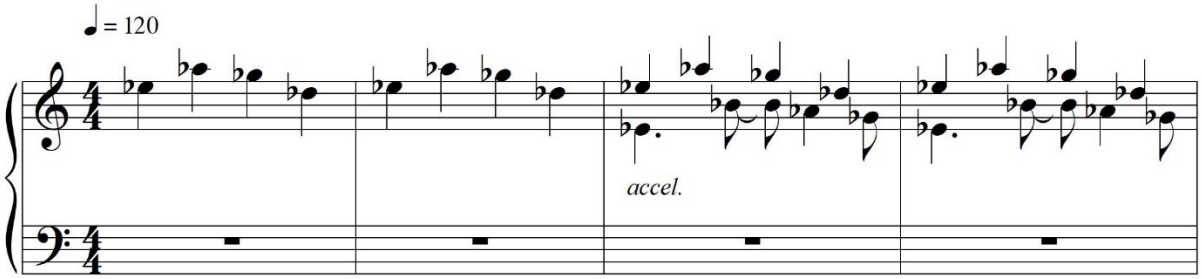


Music Example 2.5. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "What's This?" [0:15:08 – 0:15:09].

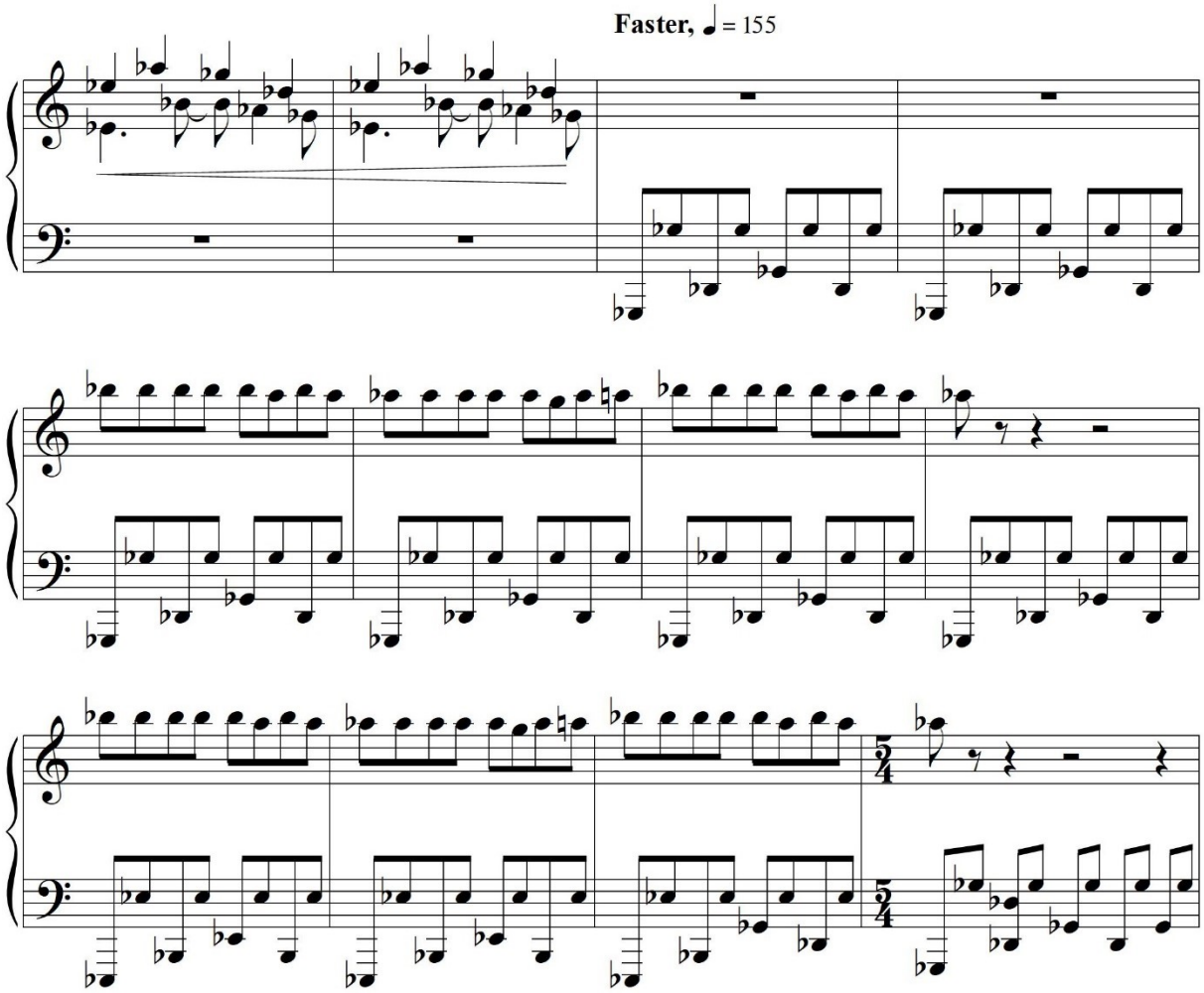
The use of a primarily vacillating design is often associated with characters who are naturally inquisitive or inventive, especially if they are original Burton protagonists or "Frankenstein" inspired inventors. The first statement of such themes may occur during main title sequences, enforcing the introductory nature of Elfman's film scoring practice with thematic tendencies. Direct pairings of primary melodic material with visual cues of characters and their creations and/or, perhaps more significantly, their creative process, establish the relationship of contour and narrative context more

directly, often creating a mental-musical back-and-forth as the character is shown either pondering some complex situation or interacting with their intricate designs.

"The Breakfast Machine" from *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* reveals this inquisitive and inventive side of Pee-Wee that pairs with the "dreamer" theme introduced in the main titles. As the titular protagonist awakes from his dream and prepares to start his day, he sets his breakfast machine in motion to prepare a well-balanced meal (see Example 2.6). The moment serves as a strong antithesis to the preceding scene in the bedroom where Pee-Wee is introduced to the filmgoer; the *puer aeternus* first appears in adolescent pajamas and slippers, surrounded by toys and gleefully playing after his pleasing dream which emphasized his introspective and "dreamer" qualities. The descent down the fireman's pole brings forth a distinct change of clothes into his more "mature" grey glen plaid suit, facilitating the separation in literal narrative spaces between the adolescence residing in Pee-Wee's mind, represented by his bedroom in the upper floor of his home, and his external adult appearance with reality upon the ground floor where the doorway (a literal segue) to the outside world resides. As Pee-Wee reveals his apparent sophistication and ingenuity through his intricately designed contraption, "The Breakfast Machine" utilizes two distinct themes, with the initial melody exhibiting a conspicuous "tinkering" effect as the gadgets whir to life.

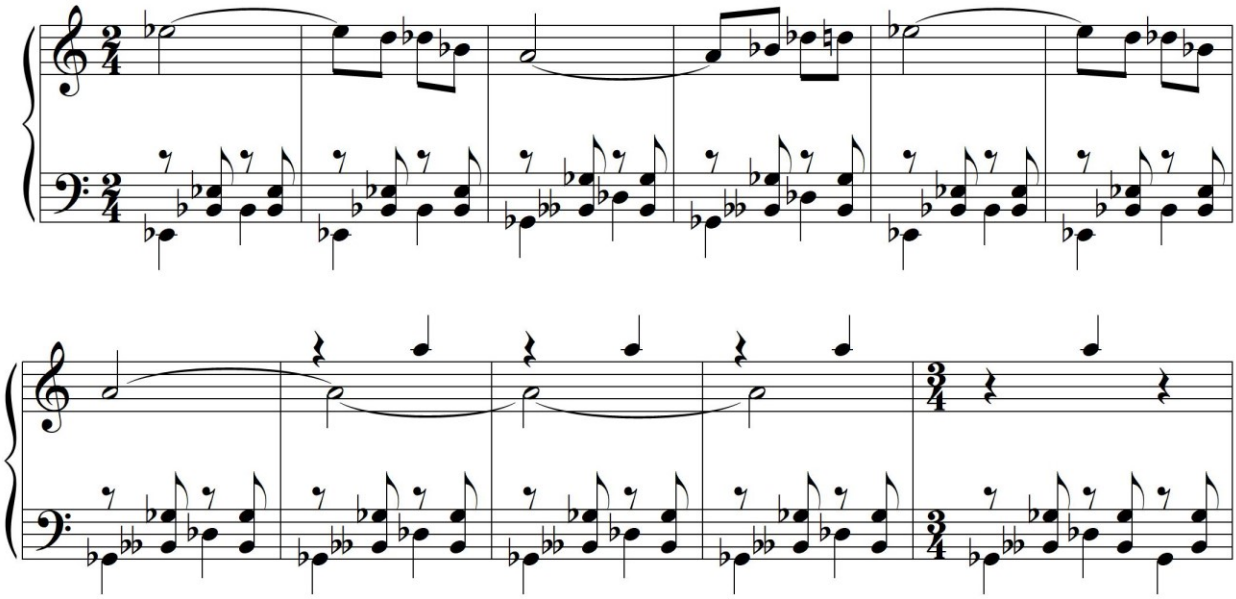


Music Example 2.6. Transcription of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "The Breakfast Machine" [0:04:05 – 0:04:32].



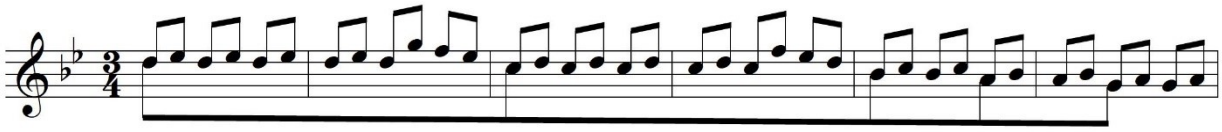
Music Example 2.6, continued.

A similar wavering chromatic gesture, transcribed in Example 2.7, is incorporated as Pee-Wee enters his bathroom to brush his teeth. The melody is slightly modified by rhythmically elongating the initial pitch and extending the range downward to outline the melodic tritone once more (paralleling the second portion of the opening titles), but it retains its original wavelike design despite the absence of the highly mechanized kitchen. The melody parallels the visual imagery of water in the aquatic themed bathroom, replete with oceanic knickknacks, and it is in the window that Pee-Wee's sense of ingenuity is articulated in this brief aside. What appears as a typical suburban scene housed behind the two panes of glass is instead an above ground outdoor aquarium, with Pee-Wee casually observing his unusual display with no sense of its abnormality.

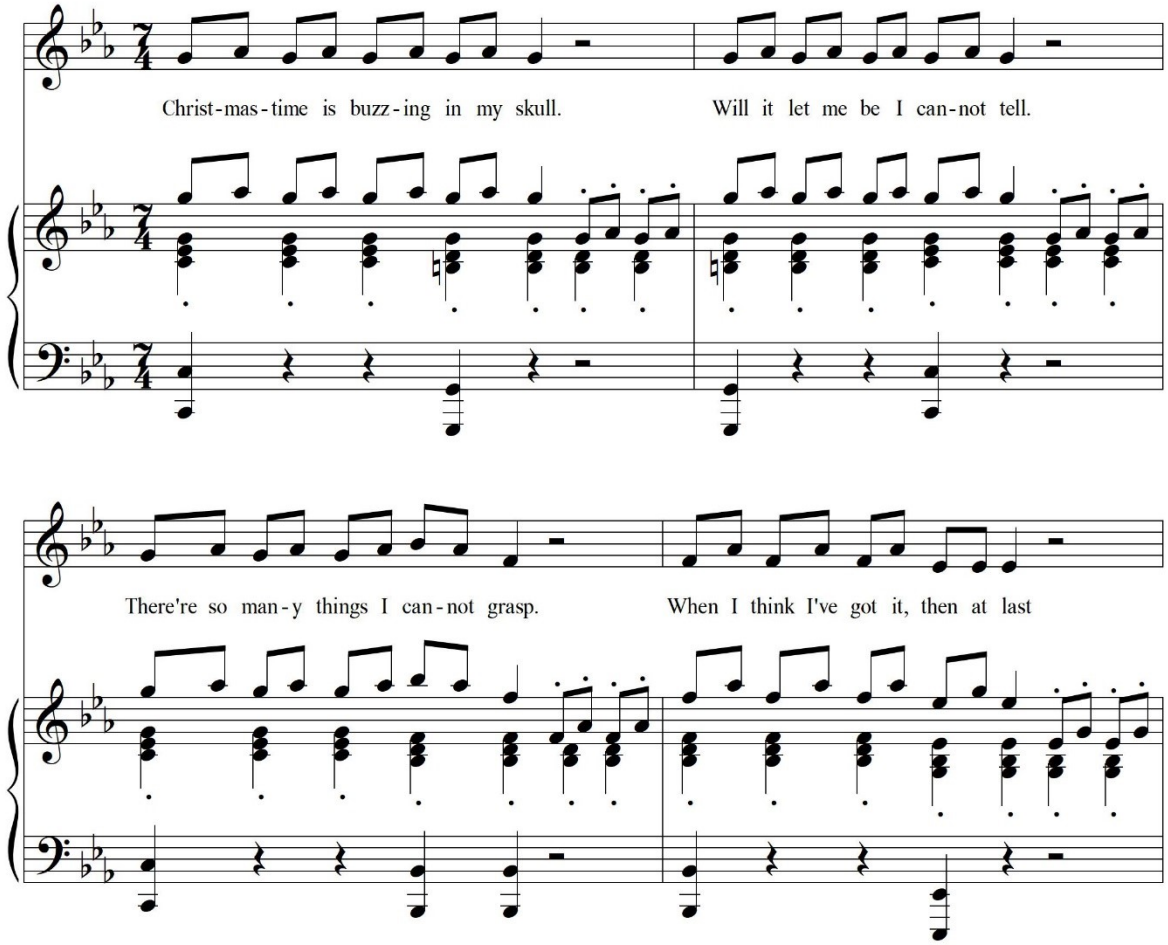


Music Example 2.7. Transcription of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "The Breakfast Machine" [0:04:46 – 0:04:54].

While Jack Skellington's initial lament contains the wavering figure as an accompaniment in the intro and serves as the primary contour of the melody throughout the song, the same general shape reappears multiple times within his observatory. Jack's relentless pursuit of a scientific basis for the Christmas season is underscored by an oscillating surface gesture, descending sequentially to outline the "descending dreamer" motive simultaneously. The melodic design provides a foreground parallel to the onscreen action as Jack performs a wide range of experiments and calculations on various holiday artifacts in search of a solution, while simultaneously providing a background commentary to his motivation: his fantasy of escaping the Halloween monotony and capturing the essence of the Christmas season (see Example 2.8a). When vocalizing his obsessive quest through the scientific method, the falling tail of the melody is removed, placing more prominence on the oscillation (2.8b). Throughout "Jack's Obsession," the protagonist agonizes over his labors and failed experiments, essentially entombed in his scientific dome; the "oscillation-as-primary" figure only breaks when Jack achieves mental clarity, staking his claim for his own brand of Christmas.



Music Example 2.8a. "Experimentation" melody with descending outline in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

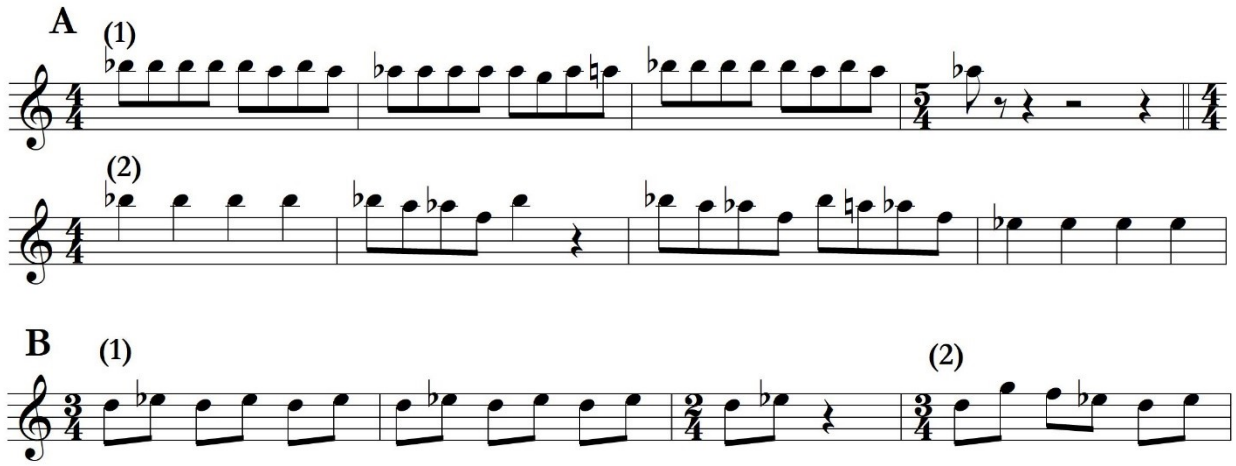


Music Example 2.8b. Vocal line from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Obsession."

through my bon - y fin - gers it does slip

Music Example 2.8b, continued.

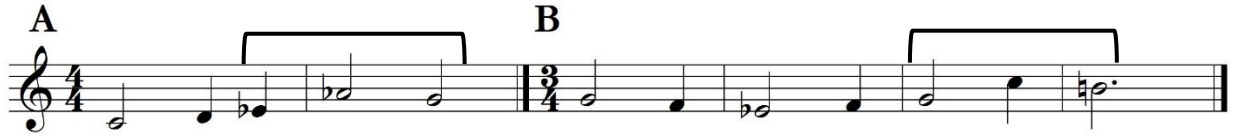
The presence of a pronounced separation between "dreamer" and "inventor" motives for both Pee-Wee and Jack Skellington helps establish the individuality and role for both figures. Within "The Breakfast Machine" (2.9a) the measure of $\frac{5}{4}$ separates an oscillating theme from a secondary figure which heavily emphasizes the descending motion rather than the previously established chromatic wave patterns. The recall of this secondary figure adds to the notion of its role as an independent idea within the cue, keeping the two melodic elements as distinct entities. Jack Skellington's "experimentation" cue, however, is not first presented when within his observatory, but at the outset of the film during the prologue (2.9b). As the camera descends upon the Halloween Town door during the opening narration, the alternating minor seconds dominate the score before fading away completely. Accompanied by shifts in meter and dynamic, the descending fragment makes a marked statement, leading to a sequential repetition of the melodic line—with accompanying break between neighboring oscillation and scalar descent. Both cues present the same basic construction and subsequent fragmentation throughout the score: presentation of an oscillation pattern followed by a descending scalar pattern, both of which become associated with two different aspects of the character's personality.



Musical Example 2.9. Comparison of "The Breakfast Machine" (A) and "Experimentation" (B) themes with ordering of oscillation (1) and descending scalar (2) patterns of presentation.

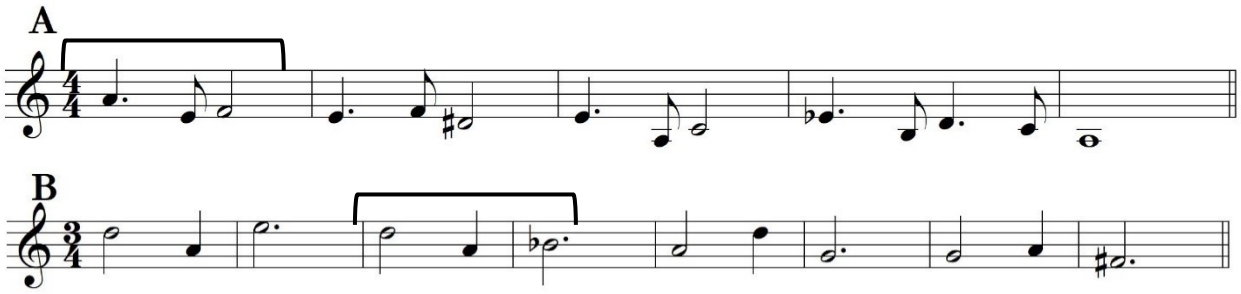
Symbolic gestures for misunderstanding, mischief, and antagonism

The semitone as a point of emphasis in Elfman's main themes has become so frequently identified that it borders on cliché. Consecutive Burton films of *Batman* and *Edward Scissorhands* use primary character themes, presented in Example 2.10, which both close with leaps of a perfect fourth, resolving downward by semitone to members of the dominant triad. Both Batman (2.10A) and Edward (2.10B) are presented as proverbial outsiders of their respective societies, and numerous efforts are made to depict each as a threat to that society. It is in the subtle difference of the characteristic leap which identifies the degree of peril each character genuinely brings to the diegesis: Batman, as operating outside the law and an independent authority figure, will occasionally leap to a dissonance before providing the downward semitonal resolution, while Edward, whose childish innocence offers no legitimate threat except that which is projected by others, never has a perfect fourth leap in his theme into a dissonance. Every recurrence of Edward's primary theme keeps the distinguishing interval as a consonant arpeggiation of the tonic triad.



Music Example 2.10. Bat-theme (A) and Edward's theme (B) with shared melodic endings.

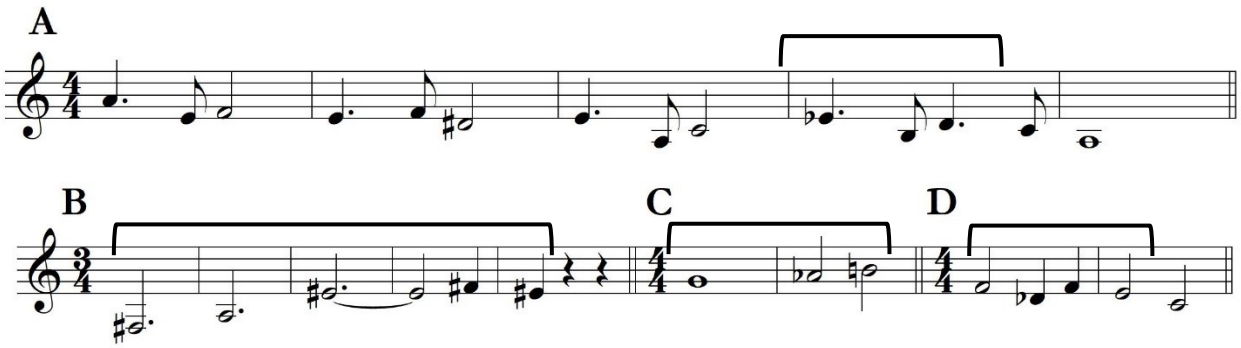
The main theme for *Beetlejuice*, however, takes this melodic pattern and inverts the figure (2.11A), simultaneously inverting the narrative connotations associated with the characters. Rather than an inherently innocent or benevolent that is misconstrued by society, Betelgeuse is a considerably more mischievous individual who is intent on creating mayhem. Adding to the sense of inversion is his desire to project goodness outwardly, acting in the benefit and service of his employers. Underlying all of his actions, however, is self-gain and a genuine love for pandemonium. The identical motive recurs in Willy Wonka's theme in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2.11B); similar to Betelgeuse, Willy Wonka is another principal character who shares a desire for mischief and revels in the misfortune of others. Much like Betelgeuse and his desire to "assist" anyone for his own gains, Willy Wonka, as chocolatier offering the opportunity of a lifetime to five young children, depicts an outward showing of innocence and compassion despite the series of misfortunes which take place inside his factory. His clearly advanced knowledge of what tragedy will happen to each child and the resulting physical deformities from his actions, combined with his lack of remorse or effort to help any of the youths in the hazardous situations, reflect his love of mischief. The perception of each character's relationship to role as "antagonist" is ultimately tied to the degree in which their actions affect the innocent and the protagonists. Betelgeuse or Willy Wonka achieve their sense of pleasure and self-satisfaction through turmoil and misfortune brought upon others while striving to present the false mask of virtue.



Musical Example 2.11. Betelgeuse's theme (A) and Willy Wonka's theme (B) with "mischief motive."

Though not explicitly hostile through his willingness to help the Maitlands, Betelgeuse's role within the diegesis still serves as the primary antagonist between characters of both realms. This state

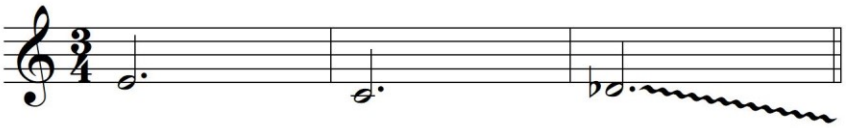
as perceived adversarial character is shared throughout other themes within the Burtonian universe with the trichord [014], utilizing the semitone and both a major and minor third within its constituent members (see Example 2.12a). While it makes up only a small portion of Betelgeuse's main theme, mirroring the partial role of his malevolency, it forms the near entirety of the thematic material for two central characters in two Burton retellings of other source material: *Planet of the Apes* and *Dark Shadows*. The main titles of *Planet of the Apes* emphasizes the [014] trichord throughout the opening sequence showing the history of war and violence of the ape culture etched in relics of battle. Multiple variations of the trichord appear throughout the film during periods of great strife between the surviving humans and the ape overlords, particularly involving primary antagonist General Thade.



Music Example 2.12a. Appearance of [014] trichord in Betelgeuse's theme (A) and in *Planet of the Apes* excerpts from "Main Titles" (B), "The Hunt" (C), and "Thade Goes Ape" (D).[52]

Another character from a Burtonian retelling which relies entirely on the [014] trichord is Angelique from *Dark Shadows*, whose associative theme is presented in Example 2.12b. Statements of the film's main theme for Barnabas during the prologue comes to a quick, sudden stop as Angelique enters the view, looking upon the young Barnabas preparing to leave London for America. A breathy flute states Angelique's three-note motive, starkly contrasting the thick textures which dominated Barnabas's fully orchestrated, brass-dominant theme. Returns of Angelique as an adult and displays of her powers in witchcraft, especially subtle gazes upon Barnabas which rekindle the feelings of spurned love, often bring back the three-note motive as a reminiscence theme.

[52] Excerpts for *Planet of the Apes* transcribed and title descriptions provided from limited expanded edition soundtrack.



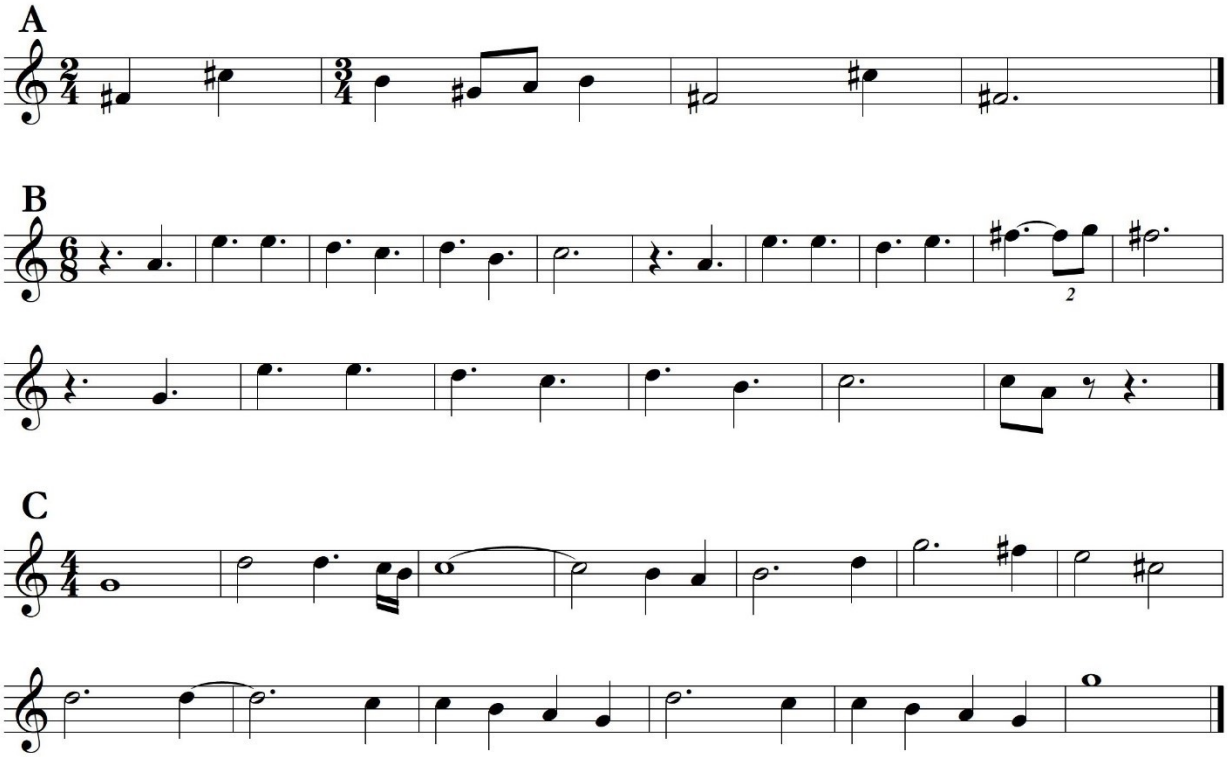
Musical Example 2.12b. Angelique's [014] reminiscence motive from *Dark Shadows*.

One theme for past, present, and future

The narrative for *Alice in Wonderland* utilizes three different time periods of character to portray the protagonist in both her adventures in Underland and her daily life in Victorian-era London. A "past" version of Alice Kingsleigh is referenced through flashback and recall by the various characters of Underland as the attempt to help the protagonist recover her childhood memories, relying on the original source material of the Lewis Carroll text and subsequent animated film to facilitate the filmgoer's connection in modeling a complete image of the adolescent figure who remains largely absent from the diegesis. The "present" Alice dominates the diegesis and serves as the hero throughout the film, bringing literal peace to Underland in defeating the Red Queen and her army as well as metaphorical peace to herself through her journey of self-discovery, realizing her desires and ambition and plotting a future for herself. The "future" Alice is first presented as trapped in the social awkwardness of a Victorian gala and unwanted wedding proposal before achieving the self-assuredness to pursue her own dreams as an apprentice and carry her father's legacy.

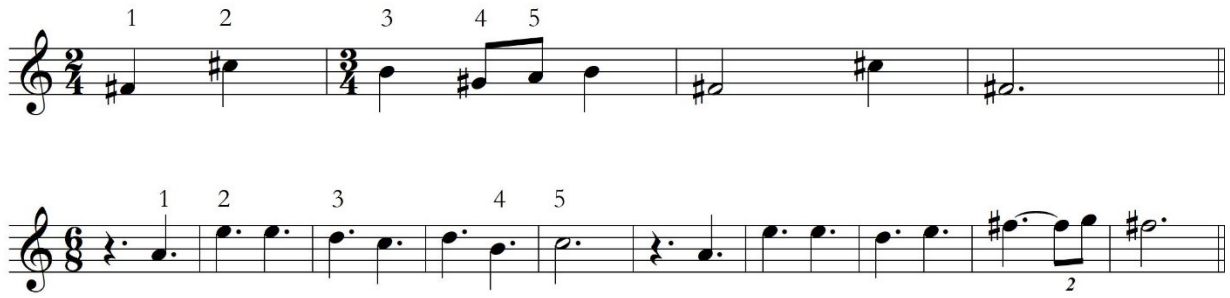
In presenting the trifold temporal qualities of Alice's character, Elfman's score provides a principal theme from which two "secondary" themes, are constructed (transcribed in Example 2.13). Because the primary setting of *Alice in Wonderland* presents Alice Kingsleigh as the young adult uncomfortable within the social conventions of her contemporary Victorian-era society and with minimal or no recollection of her childhood visits to Underland, it is the "Present" heroic form of the theme (2.13A) which serves as the melodic skeleton from which the other ideas are drawn. Similarly, it is the "Present Alice" theme which serves as the core material which dominates the majority of the score, while the other two themes serve largely as temporal markers for the recall or realization of character development. While each theme begins with a characteristic leap of a perfect fifth and

contains similarities in contour and melodic content, the transformations from the original source—the Present Alice—reflect the different states of the character at the separate stages of her life.



Music Example 2.13. Transcription of "Past Alice" (A), "Present Alice" (B), and "Future Alice" (C) themes in *Alice in Wonderland*.

Much like the memories of her original trips to Underland (which she constantly incorrectly called "Wonderland") from her early childhood, the "Past Alice" theme (2.13B) is heavily fragmented from the principal material, reflecting the young adult's inability to piece together her prior experiences in the mystical world. In addition to the removal of repetitive pitches, the general contour of the melody falls downward in its singular phrase, while the Present Alice theme contains a less precipitous melodic fall at the end of its first phrase and a strong upwards trajectory in its second phrase. Its encapsulation by the descending perfect fifth, creating a retrograde of the initial interval, constructs a unique enclosure that ensnares her reflections of the past within its small confines. A comparison of the Past Alice and Present Alice themes is presented in Example 2.14.



Music Example 2.14. Identification of members of "Past Alice" theme from "Present Alice" skeleton.

While the Past Alice theme draws mostly on fragmentation and insinuates entrapment through the descending perfect fifth interval at the close of its short theme, the Future Alice theme is created largely through the process of rhythmic augmentation. Additionally, the Future Alice theme denies any reference to triple groupings on metric (Past Alice) or submetric (Present Alice) levels with regards to meter, keeping a strictly duple feeling throughout the theme and adding a sense of stateliness, mirroring the forward-projecting potential of Alice's future entirely in the reality of Victorian London.[53] Its emphasis of a major tonality starkly contrasts with both the Past and Present Alice themes, and its incorporation of modal influence greatly differs from its source material. Rather than using modality as a qualitative trait, such as the role of dorian mode in the Present Alice theme (seen in the use of F♯ in the melody and D+ harmony in the accompaniment), the corresponding "modal inflection" of the Future Alice theme (C♯) in the melody is only a surface elaboration, keeping the theme itself entirely grounded within a major (non-modal) realm. The close of the theme also promotes a sense of optimism and openness, achieved by a contour lacking from either of its counterparts. Utilizing two characteristic descending scalar lines from the subdominant to tonic scale

[53] The significance of duple vs. triple metric groupings on different levels are explored in depth in Chapter 4. Because themes are only being compared in terms of construction and transformational processes, and not from a primarily rhythmic/metric perspective within this section, the significance of this divide is not being explored in depth at this point, but only intimated as a point of separation. If summarily stated outright, the primacy of triple meter for the Past Alice theme, using the first two pitches as an anacrusis, suggests that the theme and the character herself reside entirely in the fantastic realm, constantly recalling her past experiences in Underland. The submetric divisions of the Present Alice theme, as well as the inclusion of a duple division (which creates a brief moment of metric dissonance with the accompaniment), reflects the protagonist's ability and mental state freely torn between the two worlds as she ventures on her journey of self-discovery. The Future Alice theme, residing entirely in duple metric space, portrays Alice's imminent life post-Underland, influenced by her experiences and continuing on a path her own.

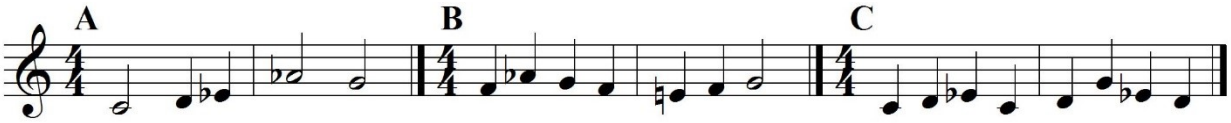
degrees, the theme closes with two ascending leaps—one of a perfect fifth to the dominant, and one of an octave, stretching the range of the theme beyond either its past or present. The Future Alice theme is the only Alice-centric theme which ends with any sense of upward trajectory, literary reaching outward and towards that which lies ahead; the general contour which prepares this upward leap tends to fall more continuously, rather than in a wavelike pattern present in either of the other two melodies, strengthening the springboard-like effect that propels the protagonist towards her resolve and prospective opportunities.

Batman and *Batman Returns*: "Bat-theme" as constructing cross-film leitmotiv

The films *Batman* and *Batman Returns* provide a unique tandem within the *oeuvre* for the Burton/Elfman pairing, as it features the lone sequel in Burton's directorial career and returns Elfman as composer within the relative short time span of only three years. These two films also extend the available narrative time for the filmgoer, allowing for more considerable growth, depth, and development for thematic content. While still shorter than the commonly cited *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* epics which lend greater credence for thematic development and logic analogous to Wagnerian leitmotivic techniques, the primary thematic material for *Batman*—more specifically, the Bat-theme identified by Halfyard—becomes leitmotivic in its handling in *Batman Returns* through its identification of central characters and their relationship to the protagonist both in the present and in the past. The ability of the Bat-theme to embed itself within not only the larger musical structure but also its participation in the enhancement and explication of the unfolding drama elevate its status above other thematic entries in Elfman's repertoire.

The surface features of the various themes within *Batman Returns* present an initial dividing line as well as the need for separation from traditional gravitation towards instrumentation as a primary means of establishing thematic individuality. As described within Halfyard's brief summary on the topic, "Elfman's concept of theme is not always primarily melodic: . . . each of the three primary characters—Batman, Catwoman, and the Penguin—has their own theme, . . . [t]he difference between these themes is found less in their melodic content than in their orchestral treatment and demonstrates

that rhythm, gesture, and timbre are often more than melody in differentiating thematic ideas in Elfman's scores."[54] As established in the first film, Batman's heroic sound is dominated by brass timbres, especially in the lower register (2.15A). Contrary to the first film, it is the Penguin who receives the grandest orchestration of his principle theme, often appearing with full orchestra, pipe organ, and choir to produce a grandiose and inflated quality that juxtaposes the once-heralded Dark Knight and foreshadows the impending conflict of public perception between the two figures (2.15B). In an homage to the 1960s aesthetic which harkens back to the era of the campy television series, the instrumentation for Catwoman's theme incorporates sinuous, supple strings with *glissandi* in the high register along with dissonant clusters (2.15C).[55]



Music Example 2.15. Themes of Batman (A), Penguin (B), and Catwoman (C) in *Batman Returns*.

While timbre cannot be denied as a critical component of thematic manipulation and association, the restriction of melodic analyses to primarily (or entirely) timbral associations weakens the critical potentials of thematic connotations. Furthermore, Halfyard's assertion of the significance of orchestration as the primary means of character division produces strong dissonance with the initial appearance of the melodic statements of these themes within the film proper and their narratological connection to the diegesis. As Neumeyer and Buhler note, "[T]he recurring identity of thematic material serves as the ground by which the significance of timbral variant can be interpreted. Sometimes timbral change and leitmotiv identity can combine to deliver a rather definite musical meaning that seems almost linguistic in its specificity."[56] Rather than elevating timbre, as has been the frequent case in Elfman-based analyses, it must be relegated to secondary status in deference to the

[54] Halfyard, *Danny Elfman's* Batman, 30.

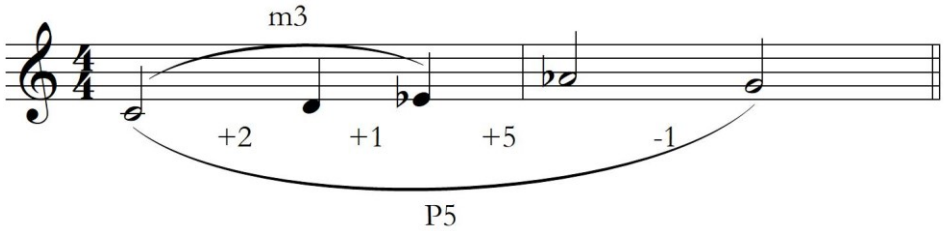
[55] See Ibid. 30.

[56] Neumeyer and Buhler, "Analytical and Interpretive Approaches (I)," 31.

thematic material in which it is serving; this argument becomes more significant during the opening sequence of *Batman Returns*, where the initial presentation of the main themes does not coalesce with the eventual prescription of instrumentation. The first appearance of the Penguin—unknown within the filmworld as this character, but only as his "human form" of Oswald Cobblepot—is paired with statements of his theme orchestrated with both the aforementioned "Penguin sound" as well as "Catwoman sound," creating a scene of potential unity/foreshadowing as well as dichotomy. The infant's actions as he assaults the family pet—also a cat—further suggest that any future relationship with a feline will be antagonistic in nature.

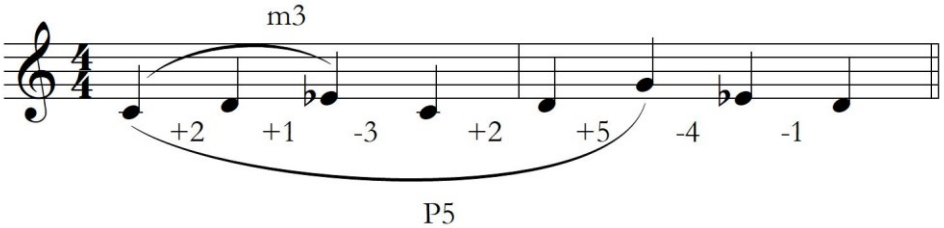
Yet the moment within the filmworld, absent of the filmgoer, cannot project too far forward without acknowledging its symmetry of events in the narrative timeline: what is transpiring is occurring nearly simultaneously with the birth of Bruce Wayne (Batman), and only the filmgoer would be cognizant of Catwoman's future presence and impending role in the diegesis. Selina Kyle's assumption of the Catwoman persona is still approximately thirty-three years from transpiring—let alone the fact that Selina has not yet been born at the time this opening scene is unfolding. From the timbral perspective espoused by Halfyard, the scene is fraught with foreshadowing to the filmgoer; within the filmworld itself, however, and based solely on thematic elements not defined by timbre, the scene is reflective and entrenched in the motives of the past on which the Penguin's thematic material is constructed: that of the Bat-theme, whose characteristic material appeared in brief statements before the scene settled upon the Cobblepot home. The Bat-theme becomes the initial germ—the Bat-Leitmotiv—from which the relationships of protagonist, antagonist, and deuteragonist are precariously constructed in the narrative character triangle for the film.

When viewing each theme in relation to each other as well as to its generator, the Bat-theme, the similarities and individualities can be articulated. The prominent intervals outlined within the melody of the Bat-theme include the initial stepwise ascent of the minor third and a characteristic leap of the perfect fourth, resolving downward by semitone to produce the overall span from initiation to terminus of tonic to dominant. The characteristic intervallic content of the Bat-theme, which are significant in the construction of the Cat-theme and Penguin theme, are identified in Example 2.16a.



Music Example 2.16a. Bat-theme with characteristic intervals and semitone distance between pitches identified.

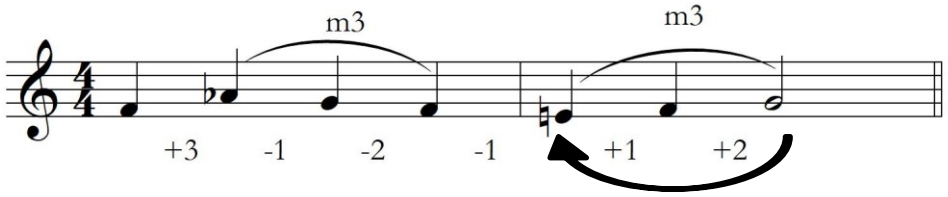
Both Batman and Catwoman begin with this diatonic ascent of a minor third to the characteristic interval, uniting the two characters and placing them in further diegetic opposition to the primary antagonist of the film. Additionally, the "Cat-theme" preserves the characteristic melodic leap of a perfect fourth with its downward resolution, but it has been displaced by a beat so that it appears in a metrically weak position (2.16b). This dislocation stems from two alterations of the Bat-theme: the diminution of the initial pitch which requires a supplemental adjustment in the following rhythm, and the subtraction of a beat from the original Love theme of the first film. This Love theme correspondence foreshadows the blossoming relationship between the alter/secret identities of both Batman and Catwoman, as Bruce Wayne and Selina Kyle begin to develop a romance despite their strongly differing ideologies.



Music Example 2.16b. Cat-theme with characteristic Bat-theme intervals and semitone distance between pitches identified.

While the initiating ascent and characteristic leap of a perfect fourth place Catwoman closer to Batman and the side of benevolence and justice, the overall design of the first measure of the Cat-theme places Catwoman in a precarious balance between good and evil, drawing more from the principal antagonist, the Penguin. The Penguin's principle theme removes the characteristic leap of

the perfect fourth and reduces the overall span of the leitmotiv to a tritone, further emphasizing the antagonistic nature of the character. The distinctive minor third interval remains, but appears twice in the theme: first descending after the only leap in the melody, and the second ascending, placing the typical opening gesture at the end of the melodic line. Rather than beginning with the tonic of its home key, though, this minor third ascending figure within Penguin's theme begins on the leading tone, placing the ascending minor third on the dominant and off its home tonic, unlike either Batman or Catwoman. When preserving rhythmic integrity between the Bat-theme and Penguin's theme, the gestures share not simply a transpositional relationship, but also a retrograde inversion correlation which brings the narrative mirror between their human upbringings into musical fruition, identified in Example 2.16c.



Musical Example 2.16c. Penguin's theme with characteristic intervals, semitone distance between pitches and retrograde inversion of Bat-theme opening gesture identified.

The literal and metaphorical spaces associated with Bruce Wayne and Oswald Cobblepot and their hero/villain alter egos is encapsulated through this retrograde inversion musical relationship of the minor third gesture that reflects both the births of their human and alternate forms. While Bruce and Oswald are born to affluent families, Bruce remains in stately Wayne Manor with a strong paternal bond; the emotional and psychological damage results from the witness of his parents' murder in cold blood and the resulting trauma. Oswald, however, was born with slight physical deformities in his hands and evident psychopathic tendencies that brought fear in his parents, and the assault on the cat further terrified his family. Rather than the deep emotional bonds which Bruce shared with his parents, Oswald was ultimately loathed to the point he was dispatched on a cold winter night into the park river, where he is left to die on his own in the sewers. Rescued by the penguins of the abandoned zoo, Oswald is raised into adulthood in the enclosure below the surface by the nonverbal animals.

As Bruce and Oswald develop their animalistic alter egos and prepare for their interaction in the primary setting of *Batman Returns*, the physical locations associated with their character spaces inverts as their human personas assume the obscuring function (See Figure 2.2). Batman becomes associated with the darkness and depths of the caves underground, and the efforts of his nemesis to paint Batman as the enemy further push the Caped Crusader into the depths. Bruce, similarly, becomes more withdrawn and isolated, focusing his efforts to discover the true nature of Oswald's ambitions using his sophisticated technology in the underground Bat Cave. The Bruce Wayne that makes public appearances becomes largely a false personality with Batman, the now-underground protagonist who has assumed the mantle as primary identity. Oswald, however, begins an ardent campaign to succeed as mayor of Gotham City, using the backing of a wealthy industrialist with nefarious goals of his own. Much like the false public persona that Bruce Wayne becomes, Oswald's mayoral movement is a similar ruse for his desire to return to the surface and seek retribution for the actions of his parents, plotting the demise of all firstborn sons in the city. To achieve his master plan, the Penguin—under the guise of his human façade—must ascend to the surface and assume a generous and benevolent identity, largely by casting himself as the opposite of the "true nature" of the Bat.

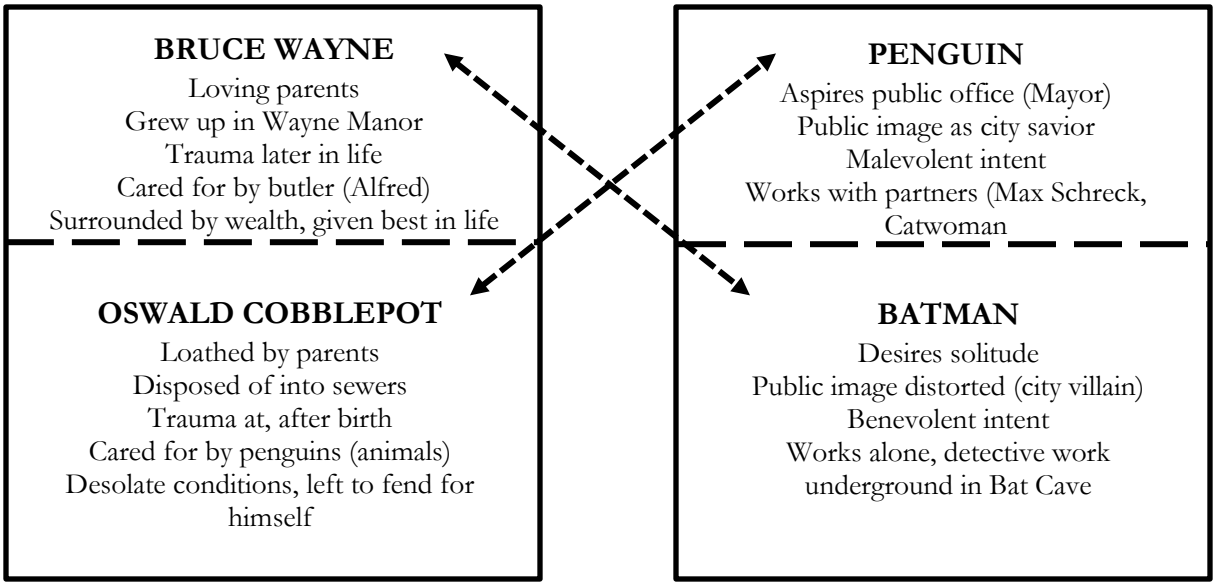
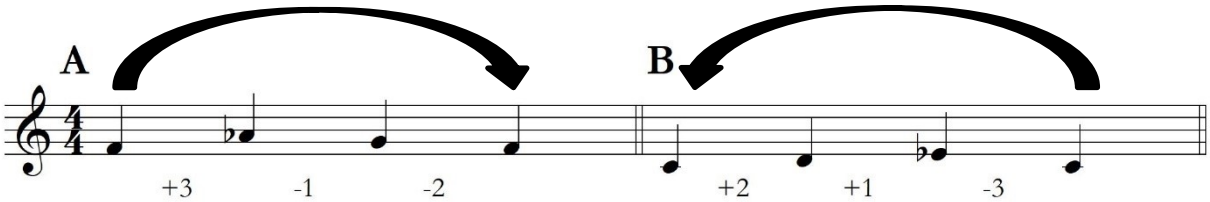


Figure 2.2. Literal and metaphorical diegetic spaces and inversional relationships between Bruce/Batman and Oswald/Penguin in *Batman Returns*.

The significance of retrograde as a thematic transformation brings Catwoman closer to the Penguin in musico-dramatic space as well, placing her character in the ever-shifting balance between protagonist and antagonist that matches her constantly changing nature in the narrative. The Cat-theme begins with a retrograde of the first four notes of the Penguin's theme, insinuating her initial bond with the antagonist in the film's diegesis, while simultaneously utilizing the ascending minor third gesture which begins the Bat-theme (see Example 2.16d). Catwoman is thus neither a character of good nor evil, but one situated between both; the rhythmic displacement of the distinctive perfect fourth by a beat—this time, in the opposite metric position from the original Love theme of the first film—distances Selina from Bruce's first female romantic interest (Vicki Vale) as well as Bruce himself, deviating from the original leitmotiv from which the Cat-theme is drawn.



Musical Example 2.16d. Retrograde comparison of Penguin's (A) and Catwoman's (B) initiating thematic gesture.

Much like Batman/Bruce Wayne, Selina's cat-based personality is born from a plummet and miraculous survival, and similar to the Penguin, her primary motivation in her actions is personal retribution for the one responsible for her literal fall from grace and fractured psyche. Her human persona cannot fully escape her emotions as she continues to pursue Bruce Wayne despite her eventual knowledge of his alter ego as Batman, and her allegiance willingly shifts to whoever is capable of best assisting her in murdering her original assailant. Catwoman becomes a byproduct of misfortune and tragedy, aligning her closer to her desired love, and her motivation is purely self-satisfaction, coalescing with her lover's nemesis. Her actions and personality, much like her musical identity, are constructed of components from both Batman/Bruce Wayne and Penguin/Oswald Cobblepot, and her free manipulation of both men allows her to traverse the boundaries of protagonist and antagonist with the freedom and flexibility outlined in the construction of her theme.

While the Bat-theme incorporates genuine leitmotivic techniques with respect to Bribitzer-Stull's criteria from a musico-dramatic perspective on both a localized and large scale, the harmonic content of the theme and its derivative Cat and Penguin themes all utilize the same diatonic progression of tonic to dominant (I → V). Distinct, nontraditional harmonic progressions (and modulations) have been identified as characteristic traits of Elfman's scores, especially within his works in Tim Burton collaborations. Additionally, the narrative connotations of particular harmonic progressions are strengthened by their frequent pairings with Elfman's associative themes, creating a strong link between melodic and harmonic processes and their narrative associations. Just as particular melodic processes within Elfman's scores in Burtonian collaborations have developed meanings which align and diverge from examples in film music repertoire, so too have individual harmonic progressions share similarity and contrast with recurring patterns in popular film music.

CHAPTER 3:
HARMONIC GESTURES AND NARRATIVE CONNATIONS IN ELFMAN/BURTON PAIRINGS

Elfman's harmonic vocabulary has been frequently cited as a source of his distinctive sound and a distinct element of his "quirkiness." The use of nontypical harmonic progressions (in relation to "traditional" practices of the Western tonal idiom), free dissonance through chordal extensions and added tones within harmonies, foreign key relationships, and frequent use of atonality and symmetrical scales such as the whole tone and octatonic scales create a highly diverse and complex lexicon that adds to the sense of peculiarity, establishing the individual identity directly associated with the composer. The relative sense of obscurity and apparent obfuscation of traditional techniques becomes more idiomatic, suggesting that conventional methodologies would likely yield less than compelling analytical results.

The foundational tonal/triadic practices contained within Elfman's work, despite its highly chromatic nature, can still be identified and analyzed at least on a surface level, and the potential efficacy of neo-Riemannian harmonic analysis has been acknowledged, albeit indirectly. Janet Halfyard's discussion of mediant retention within the "Bat Zone" cue of *Batman* obliquely references **S**LIDE transformations without directly naming the operation performed; the semitonal motion between harmonies frequently cited throughout her text likewise delve into potential harmonic transformational properties without utilizing neo-Riemannian or transformational harmonic theory, referring only to common tone retention and minimal voice leading (as opposed to *parsimonious* voice leading work), saving the term "transformation" exclusively for the notion of thematic content. Israel Solis's acknowledgement of the common tone retention and semitonal motion follows suit in describing the harmonic motion without utilizing transformational terminology or methodology.

Recent combinations of transformational theory and its connection to narratology have remained largely unexplored in Elfman's work. Frank Lehman's previously identified discussion of the "wandering Klang" and the lack of tonal stability paralleling youthful exuberance in seeking

potential Spider-Man costumes serves as the outstanding example of such a pursuit. Halfyard and Solis, despite identifying the potential for transformational analyses in Elfman's work at least with surface level harmonic analyses, remain disconnected from the relationship with the narrative, identifying the predominantly visual—but not narratological—symbolism associated with the progressions. As Elfman's harmonic vocabulary at least reveals its own transformational-narratological relationships regardless of its alignment with or opposition to traditional practices in Western tonal music or contemporary film scoring, incorporating such a methodology aligns with both the developing trends in the analytical field and the influences in the composer's harmonic tendencies while permitting the necessary flexibility.

Application of transformational hermeneutics to film music studies

Recent scholarship in contemporary film music has begun to incorporate concepts of transformational harmonic theory within the last fifteen years, bringing forth nineteenth- and twentieth-century analytical techniques into a musical style commonly associated with the chromaticism of the mid- to late-Romantic era. Guy Capuzzo briefly addresses the potential of Neo-Riemannian analysis and its applicability to contemporary film scores through its shared harmonic tendencies with pop-rock music. Both styles, Capuzzo notes, utilize a harmonic vocabulary which is "tertian, tonally centric, and routinely chromatic."[1] Capuzzo's passing examination incorporates a passage from Howard Shore's *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), providing a harmonic and contrapuntal reduction that displays the semitonal parsimonious voice leading between three registers (see Figure 3.1). Though intentionally devoid of specific transformational labels between subsequent harmonies or any discussion of narrative connotations of the resultant voice leading motion, Capuzzo's analysis reveals the efficacy of transformational theory as an analytical tool for harmony and counterpoint in contemporary film music.

[1] Guy Capuzzo, "Neo-Riemannian Theory and the Analysis of Pop-Rock Music," in *Music Theory Spectrum*, 26, 2 (Fall 2004), 196.

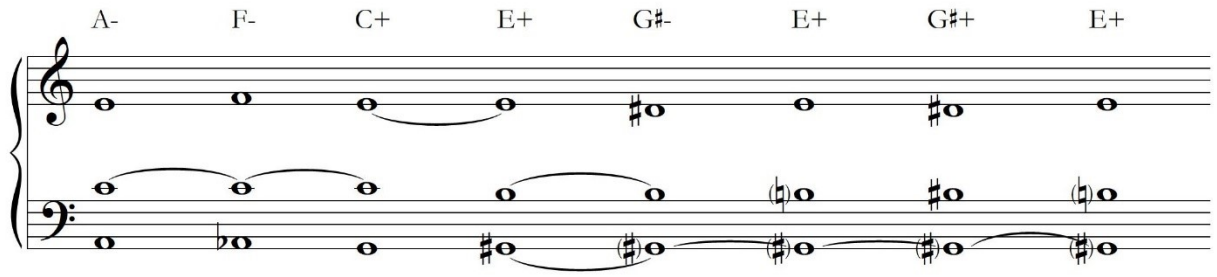


Figure 3.1. "Three bands" of parsimonious voice leading in Capuzzo's reduction from *The Fellowship of the Ring*, "The Council of Elrond."[2]

Jamie Webster's musicology dissertation provides a brief utilization of Neo-Riemannian techniques in an analysis of "Buckbeak's flight" from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004) to create a visual metaphor between narrative events and analytical apparatuses. Dividing the cue into four phrases, Webster traces the chord progression and the corresponding visual/narrative events, identifying the "literal" distance traversed by the score on a *Tonnetz* (a network or lattice used to display tonal space) within each phrase. During the first two phrases, the amount of harmonic motion and sense of forward trajectory depicted in Webster's graphic analysis parallel the initial running start and take-off of the creature; the great disparity and shift away from the initial launch point matches the creature's path as Buckbeak takes Harry further away from the grounds of Hogwarts. The undulating nature of the harmonies in the final phrase pairs with visual stability of the descending aviators, and the return of the initial phrase as the two characters land at the school brings a brief sense of visual and aural symmetry.[3]

Problematic to Webster's analysis, however, is the inconsistent use of the *Tonnetz* enharmonic equivalencies in a twelve-tone tonal pitch space, creating an inexact visual metaphor improperly coordinated with the specified neo-Riemannian techniques. The harmonic progression between the first two phrases (F- → D♭+), an **L** transformation that should require only a single semitone of total

[2] The provided reduction removes octave doublings and displacements, placing all three voices within a single octave span to preserve Capuzzo's notion of a singular bandwidth. See Ibid. 197 for Capuzzo's original reductions.

[3] Scene and analysis description summarized from Jamie Webster, "The Music of Harry Potter: Continuity and Change in the First Five Films" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 2009), 239-240.

voice leading work, is projected as a move across the near entirety of the *Tonnetz*, establishing the visual metaphor of the "take-off" but ignoring the foundational voice leading underpinning the passage; likewise, a considerably smaller path on the *Tonnetz* to an analogous location could have been achieved but is avoided. A similar issue occurs between the second and third phrases, where an enharmonic reinterpretation of a chord (F♯-) within an equal tempered pitch space would drastically alter—if not dismantle—the graphic symbolism Webster attempts to portray.[4] By using more notational conventions and convenient distances to separate phrases while excluding both voice leading considerations and enharmonic equivalencies, Webster's visual metaphor becomes not only anachronistic of neo-Riemannian analytical methodologies but also problematic in its application of neo-Riemannian tools to manifest illusory visual representations.

Frank Lehman's 2012 dissertation provides a thorough application of transformational hermeneutics, particularly the lens of neo-Riemannian harmonic theory, as a means of analysis for contemporary film music. Building from the long-held tradition of film music's connection to nineteenth century harmonic tradition, Lehman proposes five qualities which reveal the aptitude (neo-Riemannian) transformational theory offers to the contemporary film music scholar: combinatoriality of three primary transformations (**L**, **P**, **R**) is sufficient to articulate the relationship of all twenty-four major and minor triads when abstracted as such; parsimonious voice leading to identify the maximal smoothness and efficiency between consecutive harmonies; contextuality achieved through acting "in equal and opposite ways on triads of opposing mode," creating differing results of identical transformations applied to dissimilar initial triads;[5] enharmonic equivalence within the tonal pitch space; and a sense of spatiality with which to construct conceptual mappings and geometries through

[4] For Webster's original analyses, see Ibid. 774-78. The four graphs are included as an appendix within the dissertation and supplement the original analysis, drawn from a published piano version of the piece and not the original film score.

[5] Frank Lehman, "Reading Tonality Through Film: Transformational Hermeneutics and the Music of Hollywood" (Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard Univeristy, 2012), 6.

repeatable operations and progressions.[6] Beyond simply providing analytical labels for harmonic processes, though, Lehman asserts that the active engagement of the listener and the interpretive role of the analyst are critical components within the experience of the process, moving simply beyond providing declarative accounts of harmonic events.[7]

This criterion of interpretation within the context of neo-Riemannian analysis forms the crux of the technique's potential and value within film music analysis. Lehman summarizes, "The heart of the transformational enterprise should not consist solely in the description of musical events and relations as they are, as if such descriptions existed in some analytically objective vacuum. Rather, it is the theorist's task to put forth interpretations of how these events can be heard by an active and engaged listener. . . . In reconstructing these meaning-pathways, the interpreter has as much a responsibility to avoid contrived or specious readings as they do to produce insightful and aesthetically-enriching takes on the text at hand."[8] In developing his analytical model, Lehman posits four key moments:

1. **Operation Attribution**—The selection of a neo-Riemannian operation is contingent not simply on a voice leading fact or convenience, but within a larger harmonic (and, particularly for film music, dramatic) context, as well as determining the spatial context in which relationships and pathways can be depicted.
2. **Network Spatio-Temporal Design**—Dependent on interpretive goals, flexibility of graphic devices and networks (*Tonnetz*, figural/event-based,

[6] See Ibid. 6-7.

[7] Lehman states, "At its heart, a neo-Riemannian analysis is neither a statement about the group structure of a set of operations, nor the presence of tight voice leading, nor the coordination within a space such as the *Tonnetz*. Least of all is it a neutral labeling system. Rather, (neo-Riemannian theory) provides a method of unmatched sensitivity for characterizing the harmonic relations that a listener experiences, or might wish to entertain, while parsing a musical text. Every transformational label amounts to an *interpretation* of how to understand a musical event in its context. (Neo-Riemannian theory's) richest resource lies not in the size of the transformational inventory, nor the number of objects it can neatly cross-relate, but in how it enables events to be *read* in terms of others, as part of a network of musical potentialities" (Ibid. 8, emphasis in original). To emphasize the role of analyst and the significance of such potentials and their corresponding effects in determining a methodology for expressing a relationship, Lehman presents nine different possibilities for describing the transformation from G+ → C+, a list which is readily acknowledged as incomplete. The multitude of options all lead to the same conclusion and display the methodology's great diversity, but the degree of plausibility from a listener's standpoint—let alone the implications involved in interpretive relationships—reveal the potential for conflict.

[8] Ibid. 158.

formal/atemporal) and intermingling may yield important, alternative perceptions. Projections within a given space may seem atemporal or indistinct (suspension of time, non-goal oriented, etc.) in projections of time, especially in nonlinear presentation.

3. **Harmonic Hierarchy**—Pitch centricity, despite the chromatic saturation present, tends to remain intact, with transformational analysis offering an alternative interpretation to different kinds of procedures beyond traditional tonal methodology (such as the techniques outlined in Schenkerian theory).
4. **Transformational Continuity**—Transformational analysis, especially through listener's identification with voice leading parsimony, provides a sense of perceptual and experienced-based continuity unafforded by object-based theories such as Roman numeral analysis.[9]

Scott Murphy expands upon the use of neo-Riemannian theory and labels and explores the connection of triadic progressions with narrative connotations in popular film music. Diverging from traditional neo-Riemannian notation and application by averting from inversional equivalence for labels, Murphy incorporates a system of forty-eight "tonal-triadic progression classes" (TTPCs) which provides a more diverse vocabulary for identifying chordal motion. In this system, emphasis is placed not on the location of the chords within the progression but instead on the hierarchical role of each chord—how it is perceived with respect to tonicization.[10] The TTPC labeling system identifies the relationship between two harmonies as "MnM," where the first letter ("M") indicates the quality of the tonicized triad (capital for major, lowercase for minor), the second letter indicates the quality of the nontonic triad, and "n" denotes the upwards semitonal distance between the roots of the two chords. Of the forty-eight potential TTPCs, Murphy identifies ten progressions in particular, provided in Figure 3.2, which have a stronger narrative correlation than the remaining options:

1. **M6M**—outer space

[9] Summarized from Ibid. 161-170.

[10] See Scott Murphy, "Transformational Theory and the Analysis of Film Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford, 2014), 485. Murphy summarizes, "The tonic bias required to define one of these forty-eight "tonal-triadic progression classes" . . . could occur with a clear tonicization before or after the progression or, through an imbalance in the presentation of the triads themselves, commonly through an initial flanking of one triad by the other (I—X—I) or, less often, through an emphasis of one triad over the other through metrical placement, duration, or volume" (485).

2. **m8m**—antagonism, with references to the sinister or unnatural
3. **M4m**—often undulatory, contemplation of considerable loss, usually the death of a loved one
4. **M5m**—Middle Eastern locales; male heterosexual meetings with females
5. **m6m**—antagonism, mortal threats from natural phenomena, situations, and objects rather than adversaries/characters
6. **M7m**—wonderment, success, optimism, transcendence
7. **m5M**—wonderment, success, optimism, transcendence
8. **m2M**—mystery or uncertainty, perhaps dark humor
9. **M2M**—protagonism, heroism, merriment or joy
5. **M8M**—protagonism, heroism, elements of the fantastical[11]

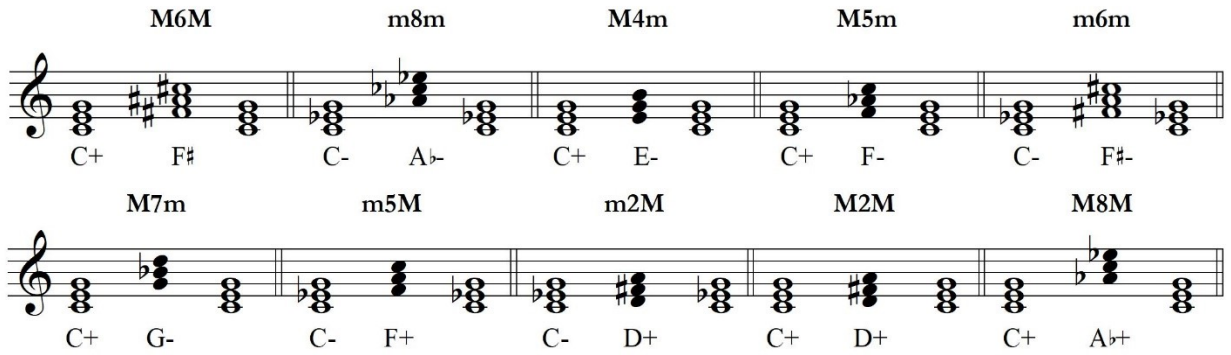


Figure 3.2. Examples of ten narrative TTPCs, using C as tonic.[12]

Murphy further expounds upon the voice leading qualities of the M6M, which he dubs the "major tritone progression" (MTTP), and draws parallels between the inner harmonic/contrapuntal workings with its narrative associations to outer space. The visual locale of space provides a sense of destabilization for the filmgoer due to three initial factors: literal distance from traditional terrestrial foregrounding, ambiguity of temporality and location/orientation, and unfamiliarity from non-experienced filmic perspective.[13] Additionally, the unique voice leading work associated with the MTTP is intimately linked with these perspectives, revealing an internal and external narrative

[11] Summarized from Ibid. 487-488. Murphy notes that the tonal inverses of M7m and m5M have "neither a tonal bias nor an associative distinction between these two TTPCs overall" (488).

[12] For all examples, the tonicized chord is provided in open note heads, and nontonic chords are in closed note heads. Because of the symmetrical division of the octave by the tritone, both chords are treated as potentially tonic-oriented.

[13] Summarized from Scott Murphy, "The Major Tritone Progression in Recent Hollywood Science Fiction Films," in *Music Theory Online*, 12, 2 (May 2006), 5-6.

metaphor shared by the transformation. One of the unique voice leading qualities of the MTTP is that it contains a *maximally close voice leading* (MCD) of six semitones, the sum total of all displacements necessary to complete the smoothest possible voice leading.[14] Additionally, the *largest interval displacement* (LID) contained within the MCD involves one voice moving at least three semitones.[15] Both of these distances (MCD=6, LID=3) are the maximum intervals possible for the respective measurements. Of the twenty-four possible progressions from an initiating triad, only the MTTP (and its equivalent minor version) shares these two extreme voice leading work boundaries, strengthening the depiction of space on a harmonic and narrative level; the two mappings which reveal these distances are presented in Figure 3.3.

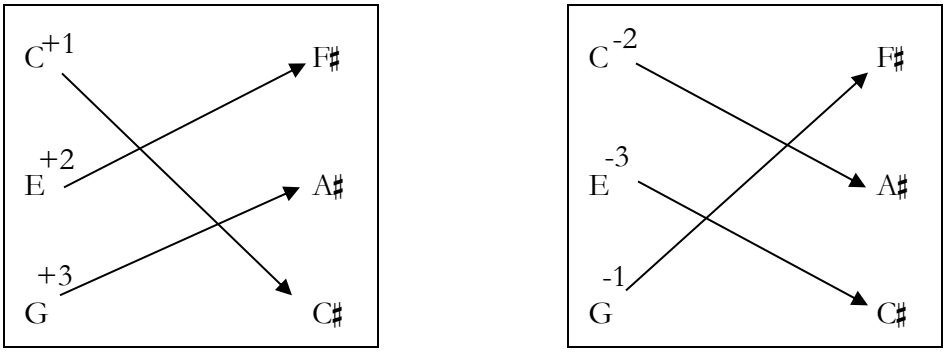


Figure 3.3. Mappings of maximally close voice leading in MTTP progression with voice leading work.

Chordal progressions and articulation of narrative tropes

One of the challenges posed by an overgeneralization of Elfman's harmonic vocabulary is the freely extended use of dissonance within the both the micro (chordal) and macro (scalar/tonal) levels.

[14] The term and definition for MCD is derived from David Lewin, "Some Ideas About Voice Leading Between PCsets," *Journal of Music Theory*, 42, 1 (Spring 1998), 15-72. Lewin describes *maximally close voice leading* as a function which maps a member of one PC-set onto the closest member of another PC-set, such that the smallest total motion (in semitones) is achieved (see pp. 16-18).

[15] The acronym and description for *largest interval displacement* is discussed in Murphy, "The Major Tritone Progression," 6.

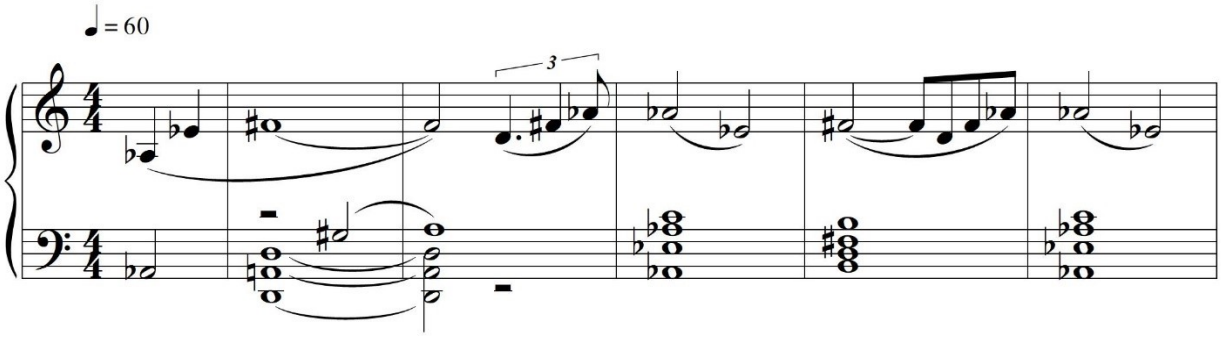
Though often tertian in nature, many sonorities liberally incorporate additional pitches which obscure underlying progressions, and tonal centers are often incredibly brief and fleeting (if ever confirmed) or left intentionally ambiguous.[16] Much like the subversion of norms associated with the director's stylistic practice, individual chord progressions will occasionally run counter to narrative archetypes associated with contemporary film music in addition to preserving elements of traditional praxes, providing parallel if not ironic statements of narrative commentary suggested by Murphy's TTPC models. One of the most common methods of applying narrative connotations to specific chord progressions relies on initial harmonic gestures contained within primary thematic statements, using the first appearance of an associative theme as a melodic and harmonic kernel from which the progression as a "cell" can be detached in later appearances. The alternation between two harmonies (I → x → I) is occasionally utilized, but is far less prevalent than individualized progressions. Far more significant is the role and prevalence of dissonance with respect to both individual degree and resolution; moments of narrative tension tend to be accompanied by harmonies infused with more free dissonance, and prolonged scenes of tension or turmoil (either literal or psychological) often involve alternations between consonance and dissonance.[17]

The most readily identified and associated individual progression with Elfman's harmonic vocabulary involves root motion by the tritone. Murphy's exploration of the MTTP identifies two such instances in Elfman's *oeuvre* that coalesce with the his narrative associations of outer space as well as the characteristic qualities of presentation associated with this particular harmonic/narrative

[16] Janet Halfyard postulates that the absence of tonal centers serves a narrative element in Elfman's scores as well. She argues, "Elfman regularly uses tonality itself as a code, and threats to tonal stability often correspond to dangers and disturbances within the narrative, as they do in (Batman)." See *Danny Elfman's* Batman (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2004), 36.

[17] Israel Solis makes reference to this relationship, specifically as it pertains to Bruce Wayne. Solis notes both moments of visual tension during the Batmobile chase with Batman, as well as the psychological tension involving Bruce Wayne and his emotional pain in dealing with the death of his parents. See Israel Solis, "(Re)creating a Hero's Narrative Through Music: Different Musical Landscapes in Six Live Action Batman Films" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 2013), 64, 66-70.

progression.[18] Though not paired with direct images of outer space, two scenes in *Men in Black* (1997) employ the MTTP with cosmic connotations: acceptance of employment combating extraterrestrial criminals, and the discovery of a galaxy within a bobble on a cat's collar.[19] The second example draws from an Elfman/Burton pairing: *Planet of the Apes*; a move from an interior to exterior shot of the spaceship (reinforcing the idea of instability and unfamiliarity) is matched with the tritonal undulation, buttressing the initial cosmic setting before Leo's descent to the primate planet. Murphy's transcription of the cue is provided in Example 3.1 below.



Music Example 3.1. Murphy's transcription of *Planet of the Apes*, Outside the Oberon [0:04:39 – 0:05:10].[20]

The appearance of the MTTP and its connotations with outer space not only bears merit with contemporary practices but also reflects procedures with 1950s science fiction films—significant influences on both Burton and especially Elfman.[21] Its appearance in various films, including works by Bernard Herrmann (such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*), would conceivably play a critical role in developing Elfman's harmonic lexicon from an early outset. The frequent use of the tritone as a melodic, harmonic, and tonal element becomes indicative of a more personal idiom. Halfyard is

[18] Rather than simply relying on the progression itself, Murphy identifies five usual features that accompany the progression which reinforce the progression as a unique identity: a sustained and connected presentation usually by at least the brass section if not the full orchestra; root motion in bass (unless a pedal is present) with smooth voice leading in the upper voices; a slow harmonic rhythm usually of at least one second per chord; undulation (forming a ternary unit) that may continue or transpose to a new pitch level; and avoidance or suspension of tonal grounding. See Murphy, "The Major Tritone Progression," 2-3.

[19] See Ibid. 4.

[20] The provided transcription appears as Example 2n in Ibid. n.p.

[21] Murphy provides a brief summary of examples, derived from a personal correspondence with William Rosar, in Ibid. 2.

somewhat suggestive of such a tendency, especially in the horror-comedy genre, in her analysis of *Beetlejuice*. She notes, "[S]upernatural horror-comedy scores also demonstrate some truly fiendish modulations that stand in direct contravention to all the classical rules of harmony in the ways they employ shifts between tritonally related keys. This particular strategy is employed exclusively in relation to the minor keys that are otherwise characteristic of horror scoring, and here the potential for comic effect stems from the exaggeratedly extreme distance that the music travels harmonically as it moves from one key to the next by way of various types of tritonal relationship."[22]

Elfman's incorporation of the tritone progression utilizes a plethora of techniques which do not justify a singular narrative demarcation. The progression itself may be loosely associated with the fantastic aspects of Burtonian narrative spaces, frequently establishing or reiterating the oddity or literal/metaphorical divide between the perceived diegetic reality and the otherness of the extraordinary. The motion between tritonally-related chords may be undulatory or, more commonly, part of a harmonic progression; a typical diatonic setting involves a ♭II → V progression, though its appearance as a cadential gesture is not atypical either. The corresponding relationship with tritonally-related tonal centers in fantastic spaces adds to this initial interpretation, but its recurrence in real diegetic spaces within Burtonian narratives leaves a definitive, singular reading of the progression on a chordal or tonal level, much like the relationship of the roots between the two chords/tonics, ambiguous.

As mentioned previously, however, certain progressions do maintain strong narrative associativity, especially when paired with principal themes. The harmonic gestures, identified within a stricter degree of specificity, offer a more cohesive parallel between similar narrative structures between films as well as more composer-/director-specific diegetic processes. While other transformational progressions have been identified indirectly (such as Halfyard's chromatic mediant patterns discussed in Chapter 1), consistent or compelling narrative and thematic parallels that persist across multiple films weaken such interpretations for cross-narrative analysis.

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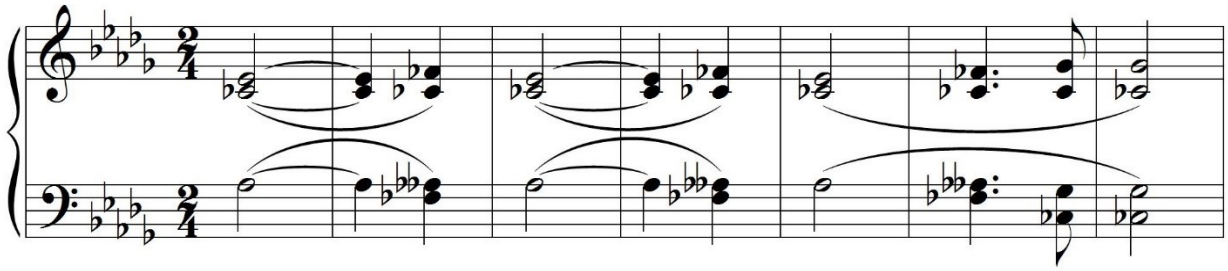
[22] Janet Halfyard, "Mischief Afoot: Supernatural Horror-comedies and the *Diabolus in Musica*," in *Music in the Horror Film*, ed. Neil Lerner (New York: Routledge, 2010), 29.

"Tarnhelm" and the **LP** *progression*

One of the most commonly recurring narrative progressions involves the motion from i → ♭vi, resulting in an **LP** transformation between the two harmonies. Such motion has a strong narrative connection to Wagnerian opera; Bribitzer-Stull identifies this derivation of the "Tarnhelm" progression as "two minor triads whose roots lie a major third apart."[23] In its original presentation in the opera, the oscillation of chords is stated by four horns during the third scene of *Das Rheingold* upon the bestowment of the aforementioned magical helmet from the dwarven smith, Mime, to his brother Alberich (see Example 3.2). The helm serves as an enchanted token of both invisibility and transformation, allowing the user to morph into such creatures as a dragon or toad (Alberich in *Das Rheingold*) or assume the form of another individual (Siegfried appearing as Gunther in *Götterdämmerung*). Subsequent uses of this progression throughout the nineteenth century developed further narrative connotations including "the sinister, the eerie, and the eldritch.[24]



Music Example 3.2. Richard Wagner, "Tarnhelm" leitmotiv from *Das Rheingold*, Scene 3.

This "Tarnhelm progression," as discussed by Bribitzer-Stull, may be tonally grounded or indeterminate when tracing its historical antecedents, and is bidirectional in its usage (either ascending or descending in its root motion), serving as a "narrative class" of chord progressions.[25] A more

[23] Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2015), 132.

[24] Ibid. 133.

[25] See Ibid. 140 for Bribitzer-Stull's text descriptions of analytical implications, and Ibid. 138-49 for score excerpts and reductions of non-Wagnerian usages of Tarnhelm progressions.

specific, tonally-grounded form of the progression has become entrenched in contemporary film music and has served as a narrative staple drawn from its nineteenth-century roots. Scott Murphy expands from its sinister connotations and notes its frequent associations with antagonism, identifying this transformation as perhaps the most regular of the ten narrative tonal-triadic progressions. More importantly, this particular TTPC (m8m) achieves its narratological strength from the distinctive absence of its tonal inverse (m4m) which Bribitzer-Stull permits and, just as importantly, its inclusion in tonicization rather than simply a harmonic gesture regardless of functionality.[26]

In discussing the appearance of the Tarnhelm progression in contemporary film music, Bribitzer-Stull identifies one such **LP** transformation in Elfman's score for *Batman* as a means of identifying character (see Example 3.3). He summarizes the distinctiveness of this particular scene in conjunction to its temporary link with the Bat-theme, yet denies the plausibility of the progression elevating to the status of "thematic" due to inconsistencies in multiple elements of the score:

> In this scene, a CGI Batman walks out onto a dark, stone ledge above a crime scene. The tuba plays a fragment of the "Batman" theme supported by full orchestra C and A♭ chords and punctuated by a cymbal crash. While there is certainly a thematic link between this moment and much of the *Batman* score, the "Batman" theme is usually not supported by the "Tarnhelm" progression. Likewise, the use of isolated "Tarnhelm" progressions at other dramatically appropriate points in the film lends the narrative a sense of musical continuity without achieving a real motivic status due to differences in texture, orchestration, pitch content, and so forth.[27]

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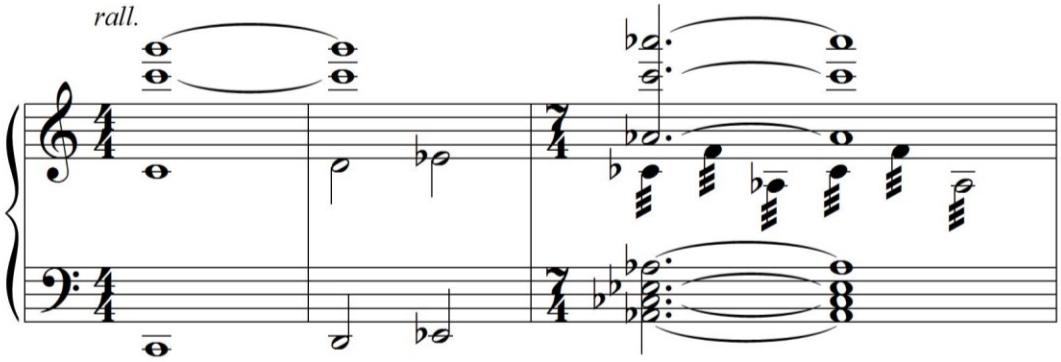
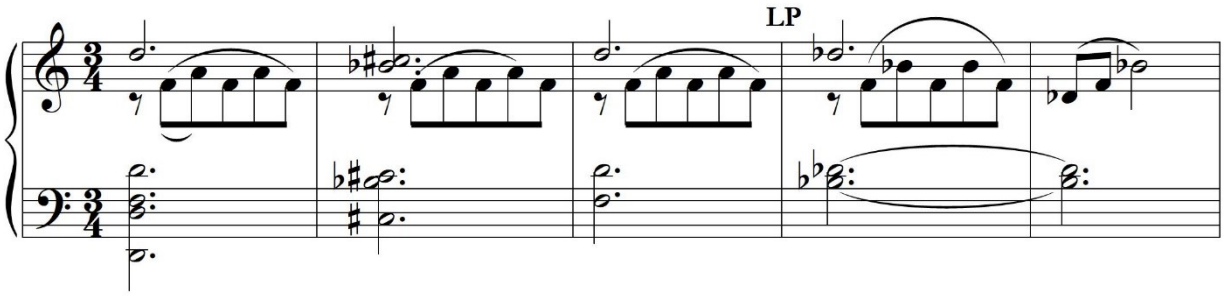
[26] See Scott Murphy, "Transformational Theory and Film Music," 487.

[27] Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif*, 147. Bribitzer-Stull's description of the orchestration is tenuous at best; the tuba, while indeed stating the fragment of the Bat-theme, is but one of a collection of instruments involved in the partial declaration. Moreover, its appearance in multiple octaves both above and below the tuba, as well as the ethereal *sul ponticello* violin open fifths starting four octaves above the tuba (and five above the string bass), create a sense of vast distance between the Bat-theme and accompaniment, emphasizing the literal distance between the hero and the criminals. The absence of any chordal third until the final note of the theme also greatly weakens the identification of the **LP** transformation, as the scene remains largely "dyadic" as opposed to "triadic" in nature until this pitch is achieved; the presence of the E♭ in the lowest voice also destabilizes the progression as a whole, creating an inversion that has otherwise been absent from any identification of the characteristic qualities of **LP** narrative transformation. In such a setting, the strong absence of triadic harmony and fundamental root motion, combined with the harmonization of the characteristic leap of the perfect fourth motion of the Bat-theme and the mimicry of string harmonics in the violins, lends less association to the "Tarnhelm" progression as a narrative unit in this case and more to the harmonization of the characteristic pitch of the Bat-theme itself, a thematic (non-harmonic) element.



Music Example 3.3. Reduction of *Batman*, "First Bat," mm. 28-30.

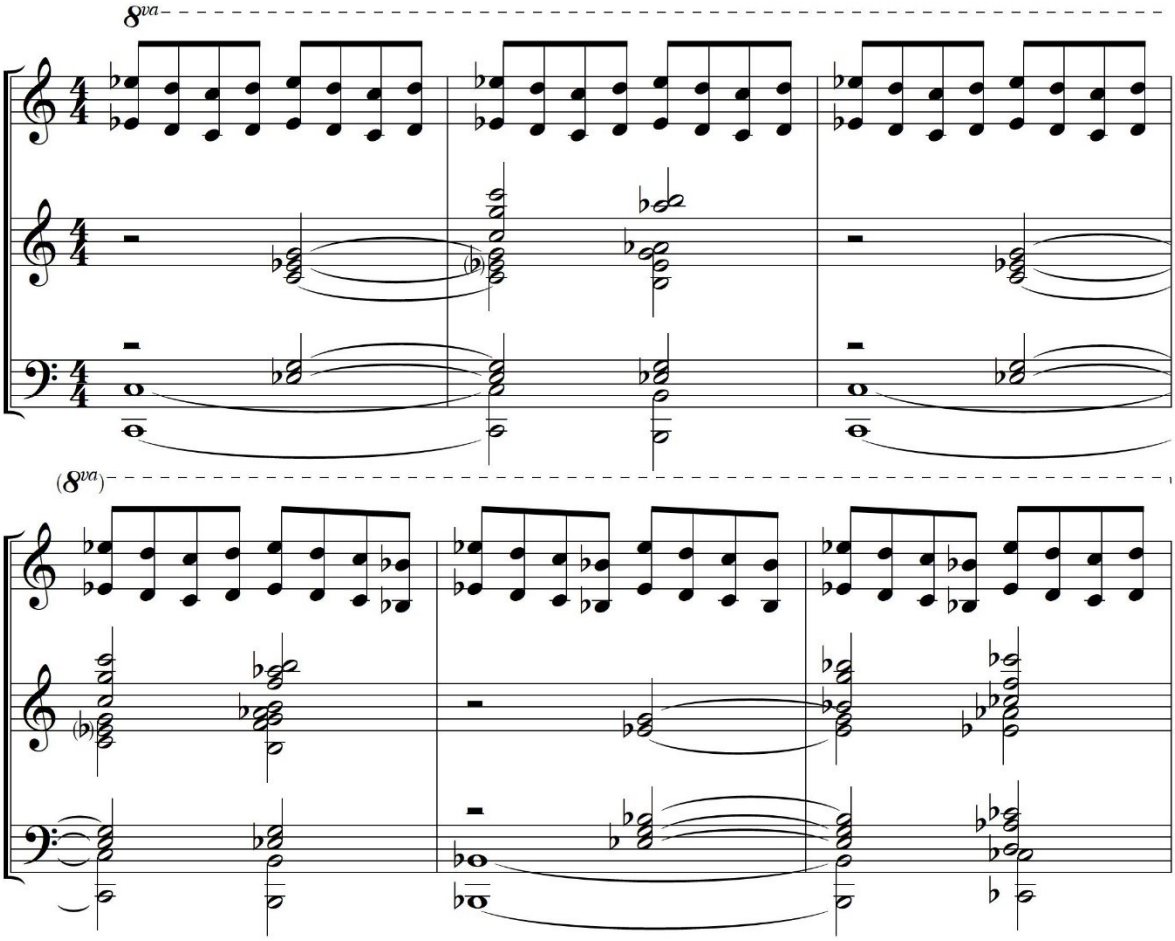
The three additional "dramatically appropriate" scenes identified by Bribitzer-Stull which incorporate **LP** iterations include both Bruce Wayne placing roses upon the spot where his parents were slain (previously identified by Solis in Chapter 1 for its nontraditional/nontonal alternation of F♯- →D- triads), as well as the concluding cadence following the assassination of Carl Grissom at the end of the Joker's Straussian waltz (see Example 3.4a). As the Joker assumes the literal and metaphorical throne of his new criminal empire via the death of his former boss, the final progression incorporates an atypical i → ♭vi progression as D- fades softly into B♭-. The immediate segue of this scene to the conclusion of Bruce and Vicki's date is paired with an oscillatory return to D- and the Bat-theme, but the significant change in mood and setting brings about the necessary change of harmony to B♭+, bringing the radically distant **R** to shift tone and pair with the Love theme. Such modifications to the second chord of the progression further strengthen the notion of antagonistic and sinister undertones within this particular narrative.



Music Example 3.4a. Reduction of *Batman*, "Faceoff," mm. 64-68.

Viewing the scenes as "characteristic Elfman" use of inversional narrative tropes within Burtonian narratives suggests mirroring the notion of the "outsider" and instead presenting characters as a victim of circumstance. When Bruce places the roses at the scene of his parents' murder, he is returning to the locale where the essence of Batman is born; in a similar fashion, Jack Napier revisits his former employer in his office—the location where the betrayal is ultimately set in motion and the soul of the Joker is originated. The **LP** progression marks the literal *raison d'être* for both Batman and the Joker through pivotal murders, while simultaneously denoting the metaphorical loss of the human identities of Bruce Wayne and Jack Napier. Both moments are further connected by the constant presence of Jack Napier as the man responsible for all three deaths, creating a sense of narrativistic duality between the prevailing antagonism of all three scenes with a degree of sympathetic undercurrent.

Bribitzer-Stull's third identification of a characteristic Tarnhelm progression appears as Batman prepares for his final confrontation with the Joker, by striking his lightly guarded base of operations: Axis Chemicals (3.4b). Despite facing opposition from approximately eight armed henchmen, Batman successfully demolishes the chemical factory, using a series of bombs to bring down the facility. As the Batmobile escapes the falling structure, triumphant, full orchestral chords sound over a chromatically oscillating bass line moving between C—B—B♭. The figure ultimately begins with C- and concludes with A♭-, producing a prolonged **LP** passage, but the presence of an intermediary E♭+ and significant dissonance added to the "goal resolutions" of otherwise consonant initiating triads of the two-chord statements, disrupts the sense of firm resolution—as well as obfuscating the initial **LP** gesture marking the destruction of the Axis Chemicals tower. The moment incorporates a highly obscured Tarnhelm progression, buried within the underlying harmonic progression obfuscated by the surface dissonances.

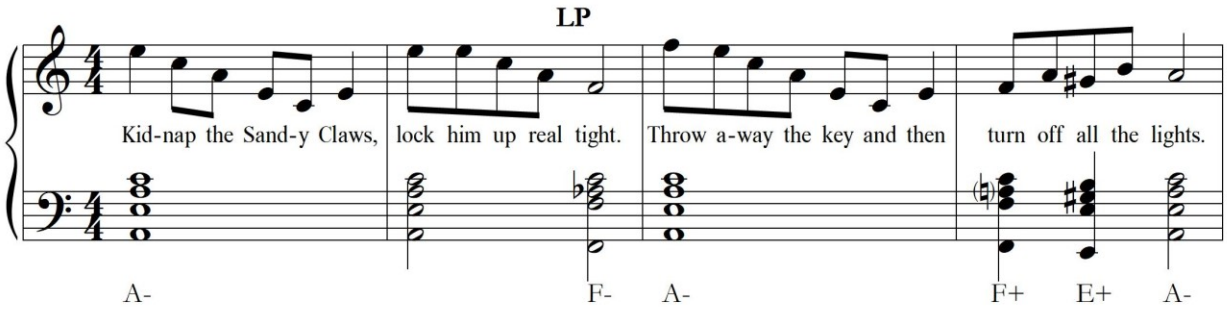


Music Example 3.4b. Reduction of *Batman*, "Batsuit—Charge of the Batmobile," mm. 39-44.

The darker narrative aspects of the **LP** gesture, especially when interpreted through the lens of the m8m TTPC, still tend to permeate Elfman's application of the progression. In addition to numerous appearances throughout *Beetlejuice*, the use of **LP** as a darkly sarcastic celebration in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* confirms the strong narrative connection of the progression.[28] As Oogie Boogie's children march towards Christmas Town on a mission to capture "Sandy Claws," Lock,

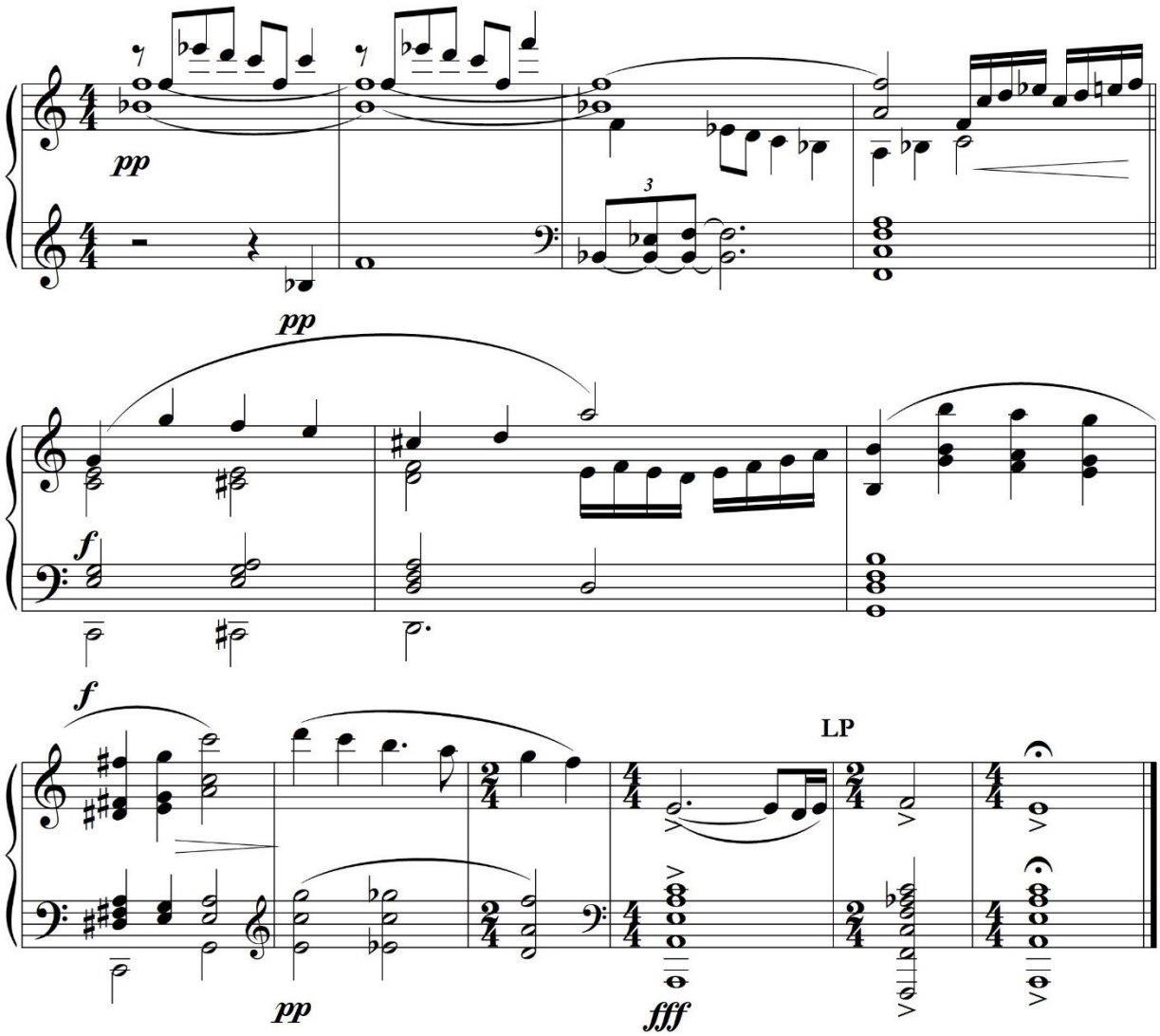
[28] It is worth acknowledging that, throughout *Beetlejuice*, the **LP** and **PL** forms of the progression appear, although the **LP** tends to recur more frequently. A noteworthy exception is when Betelgeuse comes across the obituary for the Maitlands (ironically called "New Arrivals"), reading the newspaper and scanning the listings for potential jobs as if the newly deceased were classified ads with jobs for hire. Finding a gullible new employer who could possibly facilitate his transition to the land of the living, Betelgeuse begins plotting his means of interaction and escape; the corresponding progression (C- → E-) acknowledges their death while simultaneously brightening Betelgeuse's prospects of escaping the unfortunate situation in which he currently finds himself.

Shock, and Barrel sing of their true intentions to deviate from Jack's inherently innocent plan of providing a comfortable respite and instead offer their captive to their leader, ultimately sacrificing Santa for sport (see Example 3.5a). Central to both verse and chorus of their gleeful march is an opening **LP** oscillation with tonic, establishing a firm m8m narrative example.



Music Example 3.5a. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Kidnap the Sandy Claws," first verse [0:36:08 – 0:36:15].

The modification of the iconic Disney castle logo and introduction to the *Frankenweenie* filmworld, transcribed in Example 3.5b, similarly brings the elements of the dark and sinister to the fore of the children's film. The thickening of the women's chorus upon the descending melodic line brings the first intimation of something amiss, providing strains of Elfman's orchestrating trademark in conjunction with the standard appearance of the current (as of 2012) animation of Cinderella's castle. Flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder are paired with dramatic organ chords at considerably louder dynamic contrast to the women's chorus and glockenspiel. This moment simultaneously marks the visual shift from full color to black-and-white as fog begins to roll over the moat. These powerful, oscillating organ chords (A- → F- → A-) establish a strong **LP** conclusion to the otherwise picturesque setting, bringing the 1930s monster movie aesthetic into stark contrast with the tranquility and blissful home which opens the film—let alone the living dog that contradicts the film's title.



Music Example 3.5b. Transcription of *Frankenweenie*, Disney castle modification [0:00:00 – 0:00:32].

*Thematic "***L** *Major" Transformation*s

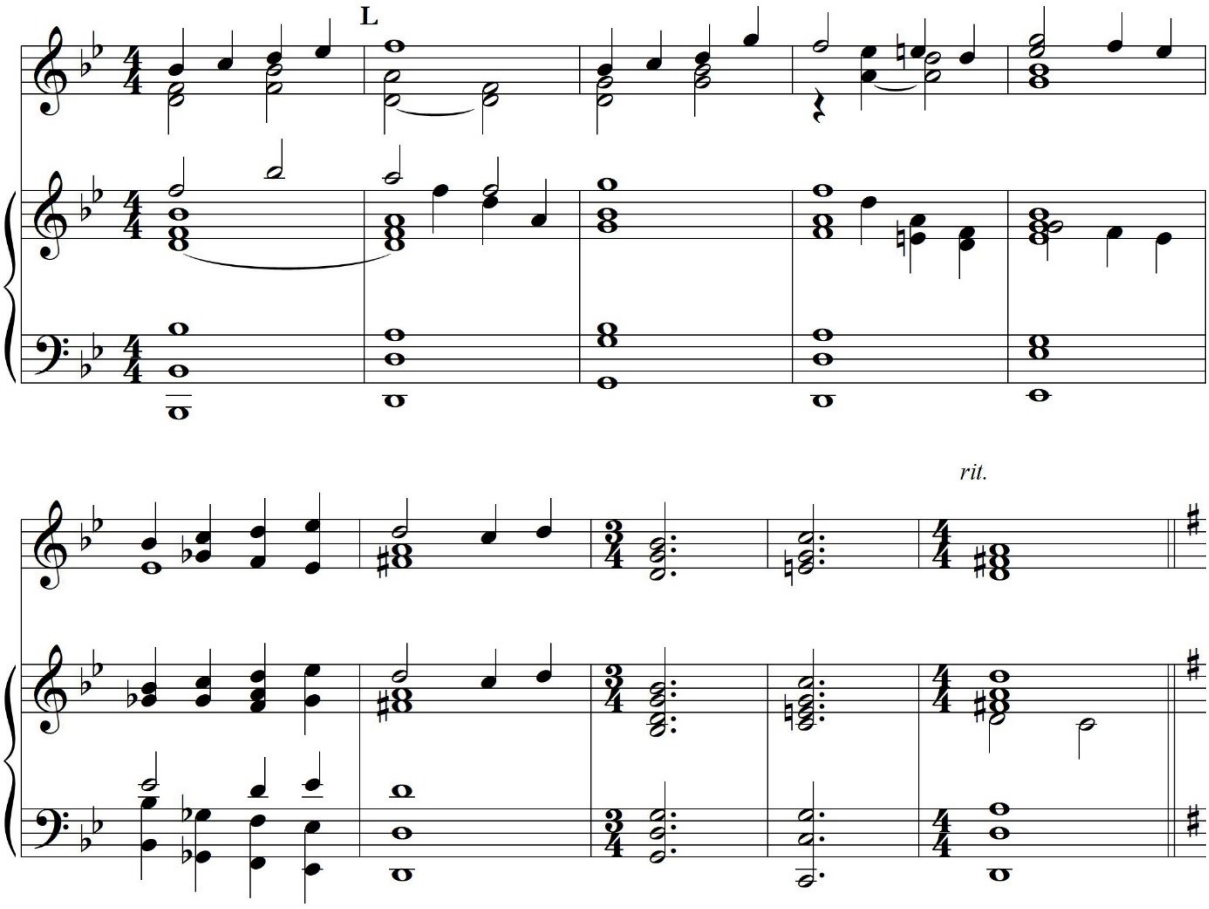
Another transformation which has developed regular narrative association in the Elfman/Burton pairing is the use of "**L** major," an **L** transformation which begins with a major triad and moves to a minor triad whose root lies a major third above the first chord.[29] In Elfman's typical narrative application of the progression, it is utilized at the outset of a of a central theme but does not always

[29] See Murphy, "Transformational Theory and the Analysis of Film Music," for a brief discussion on the separation of the "L Major" and "L Minor" progressions, discussed in a 2001 paper presented by Charles J. Smith at the third annual symposium on Neo-Riemannian theory.

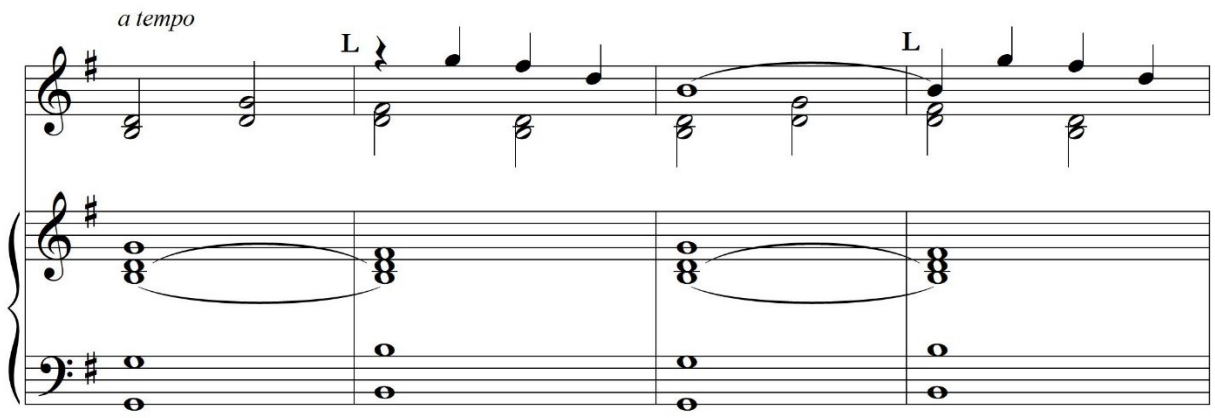
involve of the immediate repetition of the two-chord pattern, but will involve the recall of the progression as a melodic-harmonic pairing before separating the harmonic gesture as a separate entity. Typically, the **L** major progression presents a double-sided meaning that runs parallel to and offers an additional layer to Murphy's notion of the M4m (one possible tonal orientation of the **L** major progression); when appearing in Burton's films, Elfman's thematic incorporation of **L** major tends to denote a simultaneous reference of *present* love and *future* loss. The sense of present love usually centers on adolescents, experiencing a genuine emotional connection for the first time, and eventually undergoing the tremendous pain that follows when the bond is severed. One of the two characters involved in the love/loss **L** major progression is the titular protagonist, who also happens to be the one who is lost in some fashion. The progression is generally used when both characters are either present onscreen or together/alive, with the implication of loss carried in the filmgoer's advanced knowledge of the narrative.

The two most prominent examples of the **L** major progression as simultaneous love/loss, present/future depiction stem from Burton's original writings: *Edward Scissorhands* and *Frankenweenie*. Its pronounced use in *Edward Scissorhands* appears as the title character is approached in the backyard of the Boggs residence by their high school daughter Kim, who has occasionally shown developing feelings for Edward despite her apparent relationship with Jim (see Example 3.6). While helping her mother prepare for a Christmas party, Kim becomes distracted by what appears to be falling snow, only to discover Edward carving an elegant ice sculpture in the form of an angel clearly bearing a strong resemblance to Kim (B♭+ → D-). Entranced by both Edward's artwork and the majesty of the falling flakes, Kim begins to dance as she revels in her first experience of snow and apparent blossoming feelings for Edward (G+ →B-). Her movements carry her closer to him as she moves closer and closer to the sculpture, only for the moment to be broken by Jim in a fit of jealousy and rage. What was the initial spark of Kim's and Edward's first true love becomes the peripeteia leading to the final confrontation between protagonist and antagonist, resulting in Jim's death, Edward's eventual exile, and Kim's loss of her true (and superficial) love. Confirming the persistent emotional bond and lingering pain between Kim and Edward evident in the **L** major progression is the recall of

the Love theme at the close of the film, where the elderly Kim relates her obstinate refusal to visit Edward to ensure his memories of her as a youth. The carved ice sculpture of a dancing Kim, giving way to a brief visual recall of their shared moment in the backyard, confirms Edward's emotional connection likewise has not broken, and the snow continuing to fall on Suburbia below reaffirms his efforts to preserve not only his talents but also his memory of the evening.



Music Example 3.6. Transcription of *Edward Scissorhands*, "Ice Dance" [1:16:32 – 1:17:12].

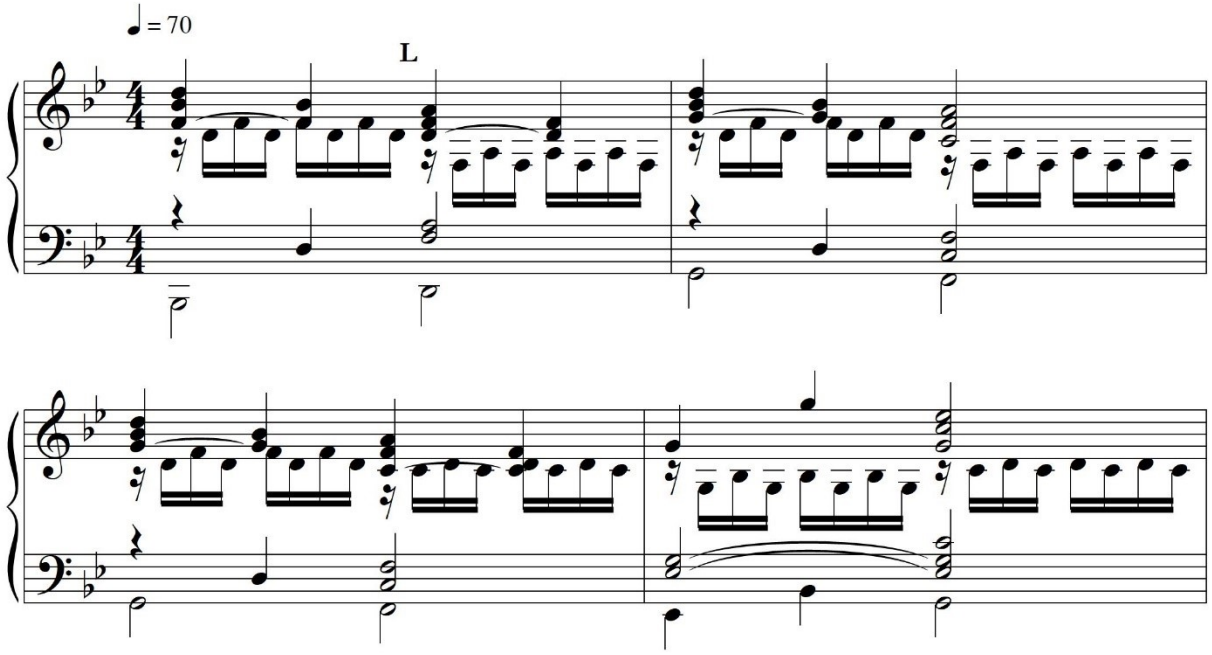


Music Example 3.6, continued.

The main theme to *Frankenweenie* uses a similar **L** major harmonic gesture to portray the deep connection between a young boy (Victor Frankenstein) and his beloved dog Sparky, who is tragically killed in an accident (see Example 3.7). A precocious scientist and dedicated filmmaker (drawing many parallels with Burton himself) with Sparky as his featured star, Victor is considerably introverted and isolated from the rest of the children in the town, with his dog the only close friendship he possesses. The boy/dog bond is emphasized as the two enter Victor's room, settling on a solo shot of Sparky playing with a toy as the film's title dolefully fades in above him.[30] Presented at this moment in the main titles, the subsidiary theme serves as an omen of Sparky's ultimate demise, though its initial statement is given during an opening sequence when the dog is not only alive, but clearly a prominent part of Victor's life. The filmgoer, likely aware of the dog's imminent future through previously established external connections to the literary character of Frankenstein's monster, is confronted with the moment of a present, youthful love simultaneously tainted by impending loss. The secondary theme is repeated once more during this prologue shortly after in an overhead shot of Victor's room, depicting Victor and Sparky together The sadness and impact of the **L** major progression (B+ → D♯-) in this secondary theme is only enhanced when it returns during the funeral sequence for Sparky as

[30] It is noteworthy that this secondary theme is highly reminiscent of another, "non-Burton" film score of Elfman's compositional output: *Black Beauty* (1994). Though both themes are animal-centric, there are several significant changes to the overall design despite their nearly identical melodic content. The theme from *Black Beauty* uses a compound duple meter and treats the first note as an anacrusis. More significant, however, is the absence of the **L** major progression in lieu of a V chord in *Black Beauty*, which helps further establish the narrative significance of the moment in *Frankenweenie*.

Victor lays him to rest, saying good-bye to his first "love" and only true friend and being left only with memories—before attempting resurrection.



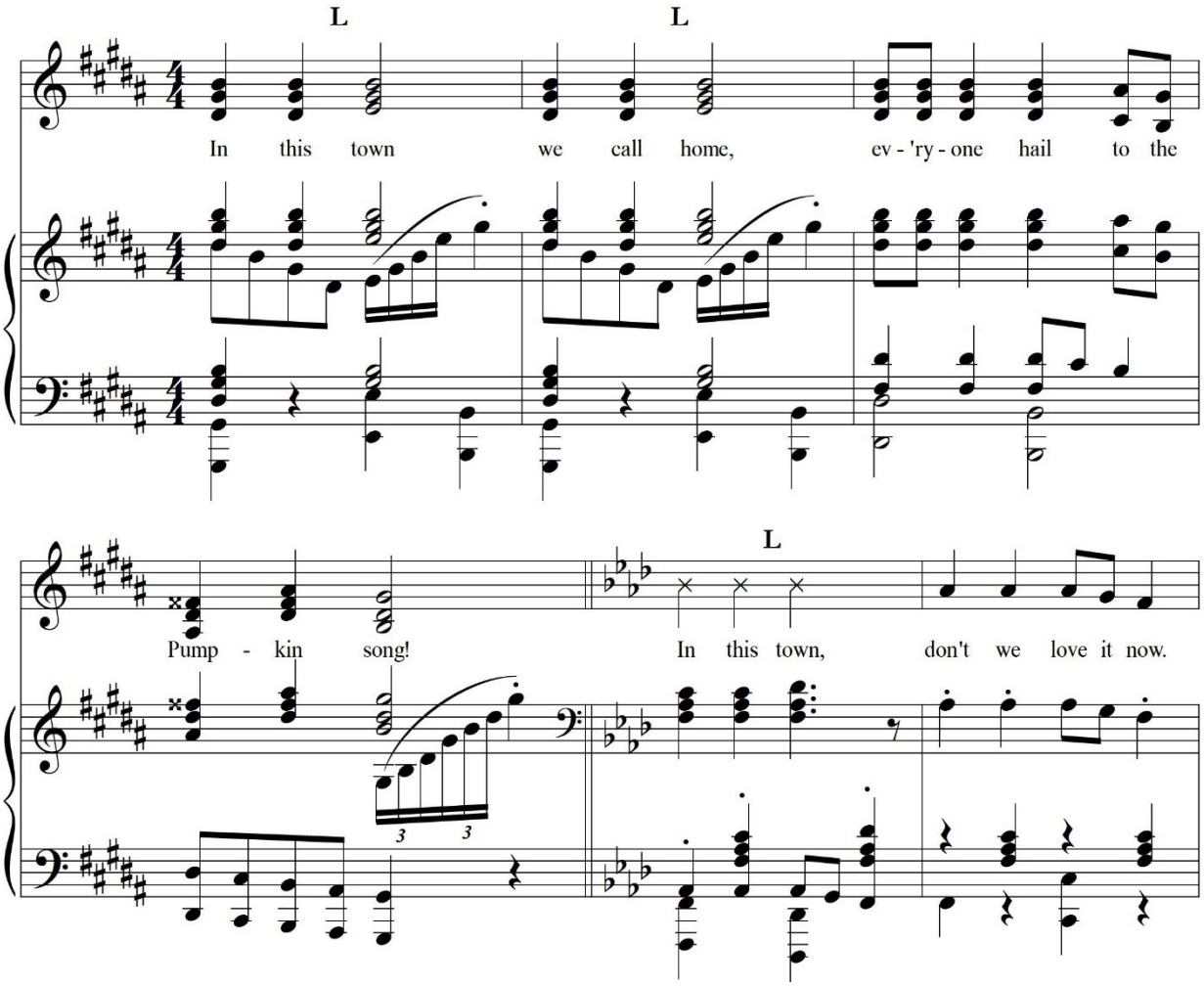
Musical Example 3.7. Transcription of *Frankenweenie*, "Main Titles" [0:02:04 – 0:02:10].

*"***L** *Minor" Transformations*

An **L** minor transformation, which begins with a minor triad and moves to a major triad whose root is a major third below the first chord, also bears a distinct narrative implication in Elfman's work with Burton, especially when incorporated in songs. Much like the inversional relationship between the two progressions despite their shared transformational label, the diegetic symbolism entwined with the **L** minor progression can be described as "inversional" in its interpretive meaning. Rather than a dual connotation of present love and foreshadowing of future loss, it serves a singular purpose of expressing jubilation.

A particularly striking example of such use of the **L** minor transformation in this capacity is the opening song "This is Halloween" from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (see Example 3.8). As the citizens welcome the filmgoer to their holiday world while simultaneously celebrating the joys of their

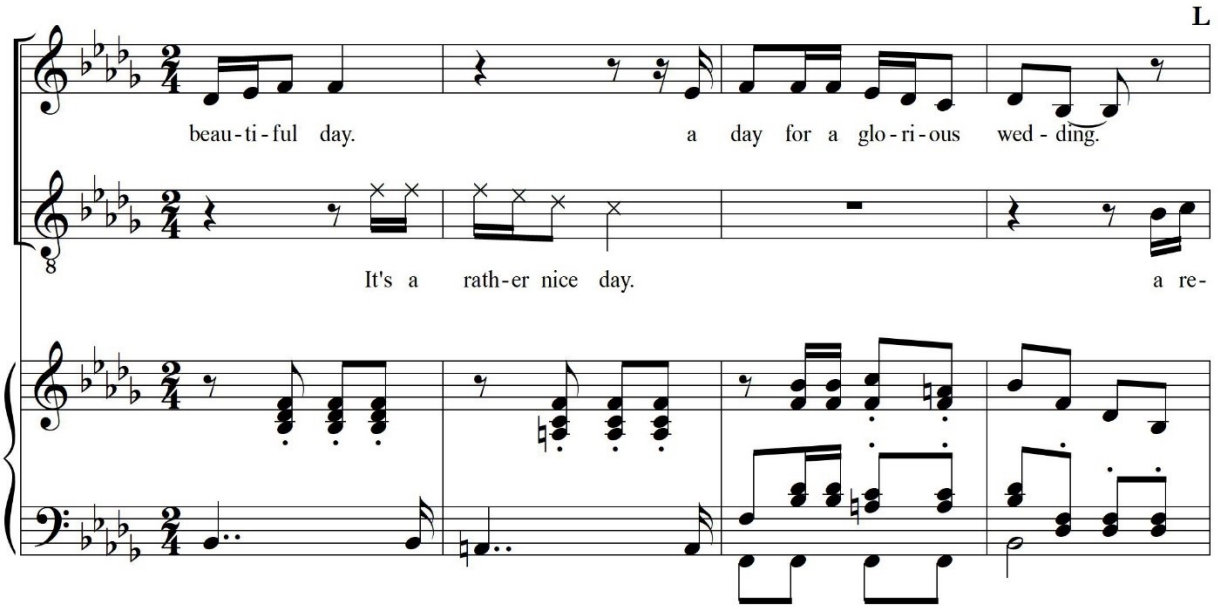
traditional holiday festivities, various creatures implore the observer to partake of all the goings on in "their town." This explicit mentioning of "their town," paired with a semitonal rising in the vocal line, appears four times throughout the song, each accompanied by at least one alternation of the **L** minor transformation from the current tonic triad. Each call by the citizens enforces their merriment and passion for the holiday: twice the mayor of the town calls to the filmgoer, "Don't we love it now?" and twice a chorus of citizens offers their dedication to their beloved ode.



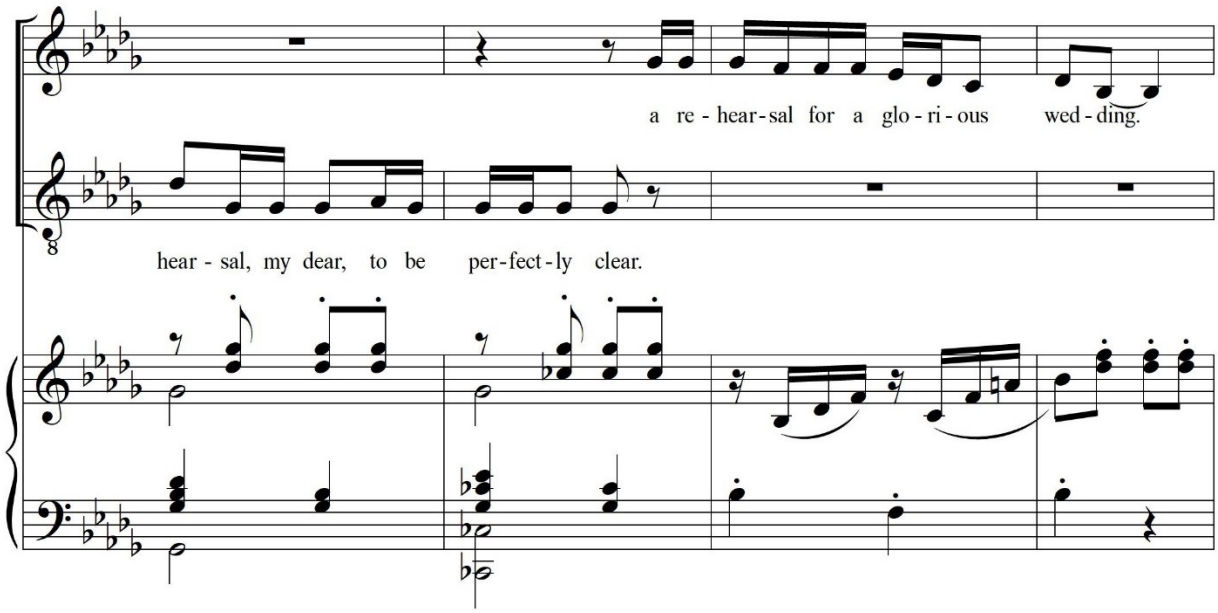
Music Example 3.8. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "This is Halloween," mm. 43-48.

The joy of impending nuptials expressed in "According to Plan," portions of which appear in Example 3.9, is also enhanced with the **L** major progression in *Corpse Bride* as the parents of Victor and Victoria find ways to celebrate—or survive—the upcoming wedding. As the elder Van Dorts

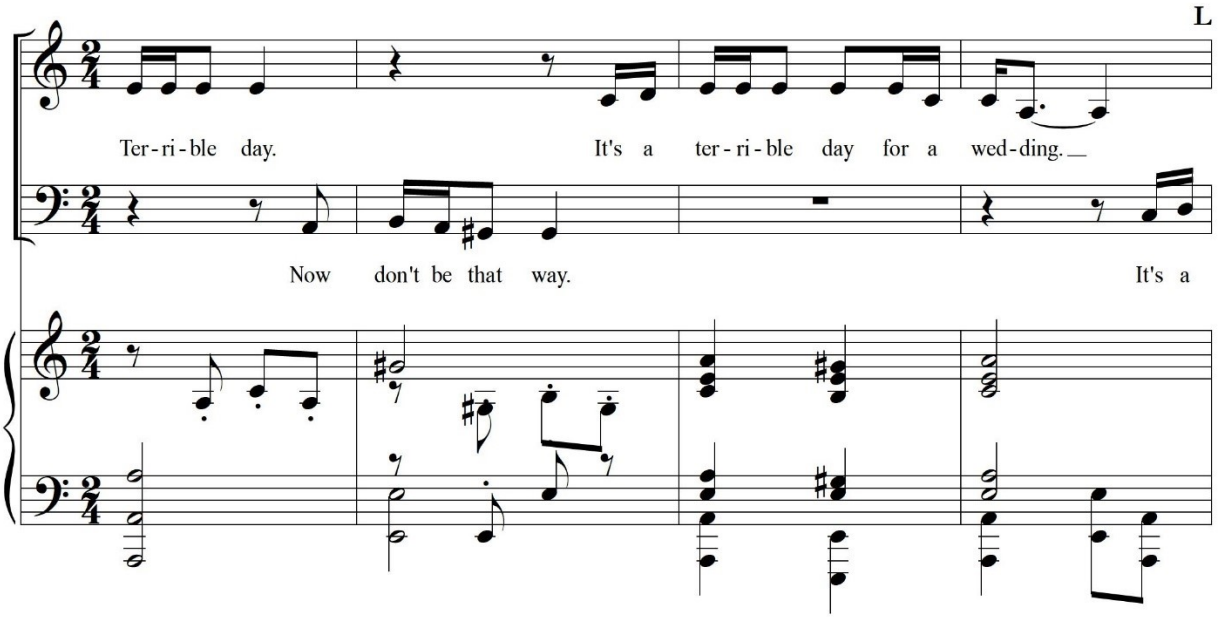
prepare to become the newest members of society's elite, their joyfulness receives a subtle enhancement as William Van Dort's verse brings forth the first definitive **L** major progression (3.9a). The Everglots, on the contrary, dread the marriage and their future in-laws, and the use of the harmonic motion is tinged with sarcasm and sardonicism (3.9b). Bringing forth an influx of chromaticism and chordal inversions to create a more dreary chromatic bass line weakens the progression. The significant reduction of rhythmic activity combined with the lowering of register and shift in orchestration to emphasize the organ adds to the effect of the stodgy funeral march. The Van Dorts are genuinely happy for their son and their new place in society, while the Everglots must project the emotion despite their intense displeasure, both sharing the **L** major gesture with modifications indicative of their true mindsets.



Music Example 3.9a. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "According to Plan" [0:02:28 – 0:02:38].



Music Example 3.9a, continued.



Music Example 3.9b. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "According to Plan" [0:03:34 – 0:03:46].

That has led to this om - i - nous wed - ding.

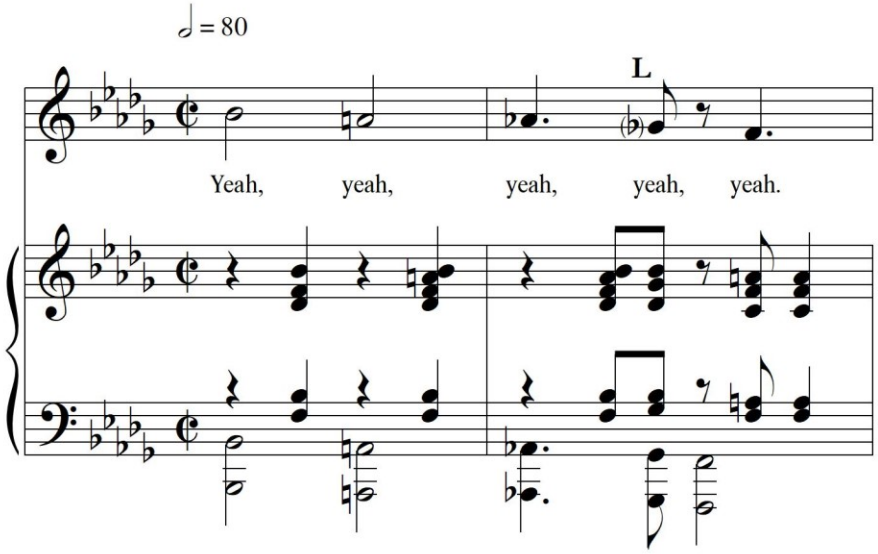
sad, sad state of af - fairs we're in.

Music Example 3.9b, continued.

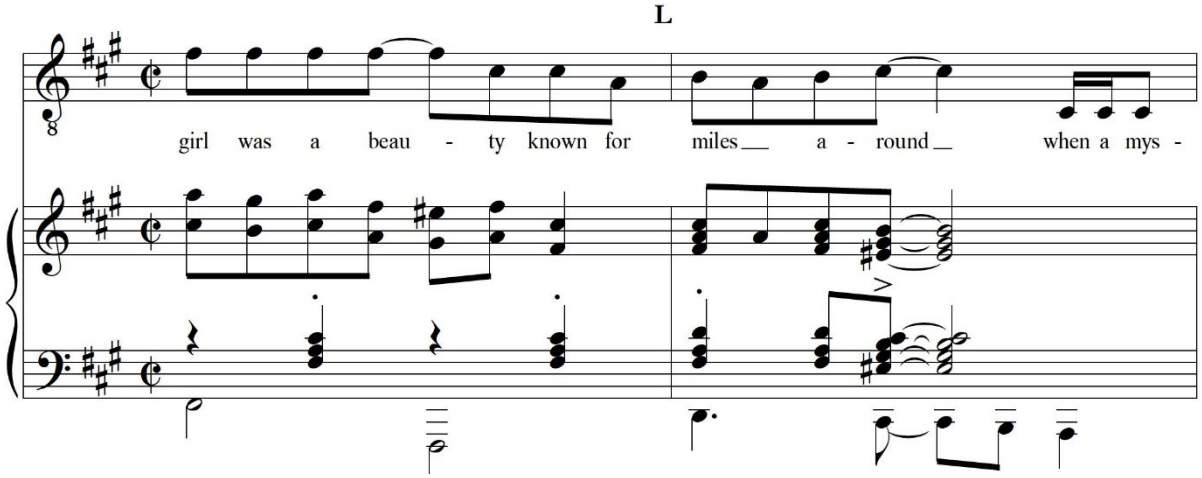
The celebration upon Victor's arrival in the land of the dead and the telling of the Corpse Bride's history in the song "Remains of the Day" is also rife with the use of **L** major transformations. Rather than a macabre world of unsavory individuals, the afterlife is a vibrant and thriving community, and Victor's first introduction to the environment is in a bustling jazz lounge. The lead singer of the house band, Bonejangles (voiced by Elfman himself), leads the bar in an ironically lively number, backed by his skeleton band. Each shout chorus within the song, "Remains of the Day," brings a descending chromatic soprano/bass line from the tonic triad that breaks its semitonal motion to create the functional **L** major motion (Example 3.10a).[31] The second verse and bridge of Bonejangles's story also begins with a i → VI → V and immediate repetition of this progression, initiating the **L** major motion and reinforcing its significance in the jovial atmosphere of both the underworld and the Corpse Bride's discovery of a new husband (3.10b). Characteristic of "Elfman narrative

[31] A nearly identical pattern appears in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in "Jack's Lament" during the verses, where a descending chromatic bass line is used throughout the opening phrase. The resulting motion also creates a functional **L** major progression which may seem to contradict the idea of celebration based on the title of the song. The lyrics of Jack's verses, however, reaffirms the idea of a more congratulatory or festive nature, as Jack is offering praise for himself and his nature as the Pumpkin King, rather than contradicting the notion. At the two locations of **L** major usage in "Jack's Lament," Jack states, "There are few who deny/at what I do I am the best/for my talents are renowned far and wide," and "I'm a master of fright/and a demon of light/and I'll scare you right out of your pants," respectively.

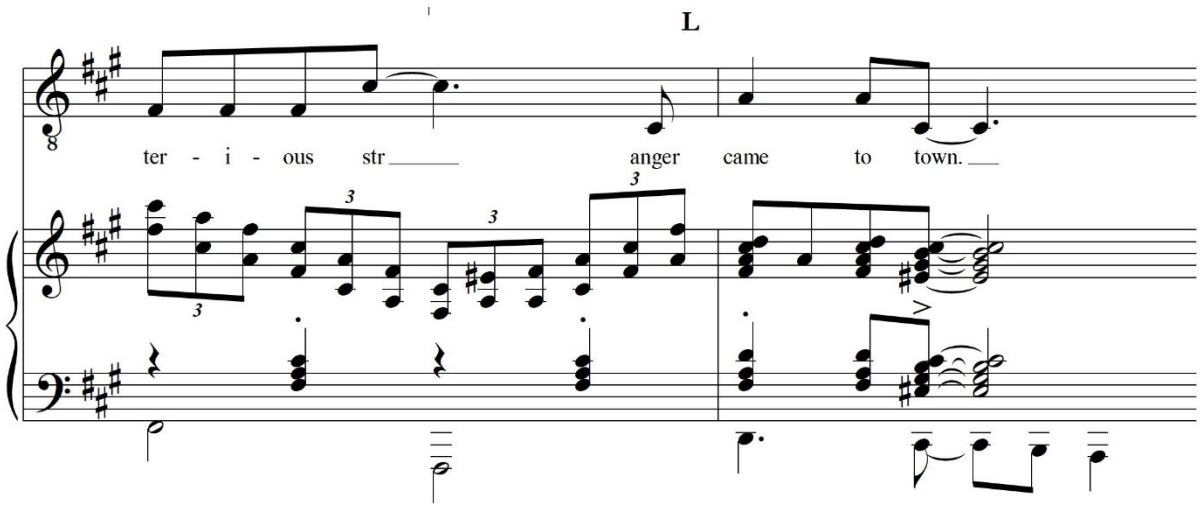
transformations," the gesture is initiating, surface-oriented, and immediately attached to thematic material, pairing harmonic and melodic meaning with narrative.



Music Example 3.10a. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Remains of the Day," shout chorus [0:21:10 – 0:21:13].



Music Example 3.10b. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Remains of the Day" [0:21:17 – 0:21:22].



Music Example 3.10b, continued.

The relative paucity of other distinct progressions combined with the consistent appearance of the **LP**, **L** major, and **L** minor transformations, paired with recurring associative themes, strengthen their significance in Burton's films. While other transformational patterns exist within the repertoire, such as the **S**LIDE motion identified by Halfyard in *Batman* (refer to Example 1.9), such gestures often lack the constant pairing between progression and narrative connotation within both individual films and across multiple films. Additionally, modulations generally lack narrativizing qualities across filmic narratives; the lone exception which may be considered is the ascending minor second in songs and not in instrumental cues, which typically expresses a sense of building excitement or anxiety. While Elfman's harmonic vocabulary displays a limited consistency across Burtonian narratives, the referenced—but minimally explored—area of rhythm and meter reveals a strong parallel with the diegetic divide between real and fantastic spaces often found in Burton's films.

CHAPTER 4:

TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION AND DIEGETIC SPACES OF BURTONIAN NARRATIVE

As discussed in Chapter 1, Janet Halfyard identifies the separation between the characters of Batman and the Joker through the use of meter signatures, with $\frac{4}{4}$ or other duple-prominent meter signatures representing the protagonist, while the use of $\frac{3}{4}$ was reserved almost exclusively for the Joker and his henchmen. Such a distinction introduces the significance of meter as a defining quality for narrative separations between character and/or diegetic elements, but relies on unsatisfactory criteria to distinguish between opposing forces. First, the use of written time signatures relies on an element not readily available to the filmgoer: a written score to accompany the music cues and confirm the presence or absence of certain meters. In addition to the natural limitations of relying solely on the written score, the discussion utilized by Halfyard is completely devoid of the influence of tempo, a potentially significant factor in the determination of perceptual organization of rhythmic and metric content. The role of timing with filmic events before the filmgoer—or, perhaps more appropriately termed, the correlation of music with events *within the filmworld*—which may result in shifting or incongruous patterns is another potential which must be taken into consideration, as visual alignment may necessitate adjustments in musical timing and irrevocably corrupt the overall organization and flow.

If elevating meter to the same narrative potential as both melody and harmony and allowing meter to operate independently from filmworld elements (not "mickey-mousing" visual cues), the analytical technique used to articulate metric design must account for the filmgoer's perception and remain independent of the written score. Such an approach must identify multiple levels of perceived, related pulses as well as their groupings and divisions, producing a framework that can depict these multiple layers independently and interrelatedly. Narrative metric patterns must also be of sufficient length to be identified, systematized, and preserved to formulate both metric identification and patterning as well as narrative association; such perceptual organization and identification must remain intact in light of "surface level" shifts or conflicts (individual or temporary alterings in patterns or

organizations on one or multiple levels) as result of filmworld-necessary actions that would temporarily alter the prevailing design. Mapping these patterns of metric design, especially the changes in prevailing model, with corresponding changes in narratological states can yield the insight postulated by Halfyard relating character or other diegetic elements to temporal qualities. Moreover, conflicts in layers of meter may be reflective of internal or external tension present in the filmworld, revealing parallels of aural and visual dissonance that traverse the filmworld and match the perception of the filmgoer.

A methodology for displaying perceived temporal organizations

As articulated by Justin London, "Metric audition required only the musical sounds themselves and the listener's temporal capacities, both innate and learned."[1] Abandoning musical notation, the filmgoer is reliant on the aural cues contained within the film score to formulate the perceived metrical hierarchy of a given sequence. In developing such structures and patterns, one must attune to the relationship of pulses and their perceived strength or weakness to each other. Lerdahl and Jackendoff build from this differentiation of strength of individual pulses through three different types of accents: phenomenal, structural, and metrical:

> By *phenomenal accent* we mean any event at the musical surface that gives emphasis or stress to a moment in the musical flow. Included in this category are attack points of pitch-events, local stresses such as sforzandi, sudden changes in dynamics or timbre, long notes, leaps to relatively high or low notes, harmonic changes, and so forth. By *structural accent* we mean an accent caused by the melodic/harmonic points of gravity in a phrase or section—especially by the cadence, the goal of tonal motion. By *metrical accent* we mean any beat that is relatively strong in its metrical context. . . . Phenomenal accent functions as a perceptual input to metrical accent—that is, the moments of musical stress in the raw signal serve as "cues" from which the listener attempts to extrapolate a regular pattern of metrical accents.[2]

[1] Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 23.

[2] Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 17.

The uniformity and confirmation of accentuated and unstressed patterns within consistent, equal pulses facilitate the formation of levels which can be parsed or grouped into various levels contingent on additional information.[3] To develop a sense of meter, Carl Schachter notes that "at least two series (of pulses) must be present, coordinated so that all points that demarcate the longer spans at higher levels simultaneously mark off shorter spans at all lower levels."[4]

Identifying critical features of rhythmic and metric organization of film music cues and specific relationships to narrative features will further require two additional features for analytical validity: duration and consistency. Because music is presented to the filmgoer in a determined span by the visual medium, any metric pattern must have enough length to be established and confirmed; additionally, a given metric pattern must be repeated to be instituted as the prevailing design rather than an aberration in the overall structure. Mapping such perceived organizational patterns around a central pulse (tactus) into larger groupings or smaller divisions of two (duple) or three (triple) to show rhythmic relationships can yield insight to the link between the organization of musical time and narrative.

To depict this metric structure, a *Zeitnetz* such as the one in Figure 4.1 will be used to display prevailing patterns as well as shifts in metric structure. Duple divisions and groupings will be organized along an axis running diagonally, beginning from the southwest and extending upward towards the northeast, while triple divisions and groupings will be organized along the opposite axis, beginning from the northwest and extending downwards towards the southeast. A central tactus will stand alone in the center of the graph, identified by the whole number "1," with groupings of tacti, denoting

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[3] See Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed. Joseph N. Straus (New York: Oxford, 1999), 81. He reiterates this point and reaffirms the necessity of attentive listening, noting, "If one condition is met, the listener's awareness of time spans automatically produces accents that punctuate his experience of the music; *these accents result from the heightened attention attracted by the boundary points of the spans*. The necessary condition is the presence of non-accents, for a thing is accented only in relation to a comparable thing that is not" (81, emphasis in original).

[4] Ibid. 81. London argues that, while only two are the necessary condition to establish a sense of meter, at least three levels are preferred to establish a more defined hierarchy. See Justin London, *Hearing in Time*, 18.

measures and hypermeasures, extending upwards from this central point. Divisions of this central tactus will extend below. The tempo of the tactus may fluctuate, but studies have shown a listener bias that generally gravitates towards a range of 80-90 beats per minute (bpm), or approximately 600-700 milliseconds between successive pulses.[5] Boundaries surrounding this plausible central tactus extend to a lower limit of approximately 100 milliseconds (submetric level), and an upper level of approximately 5-6 seconds (metric and hypermetric level), with a suggested maximum potential of 8 seconds between periodicities.[6]

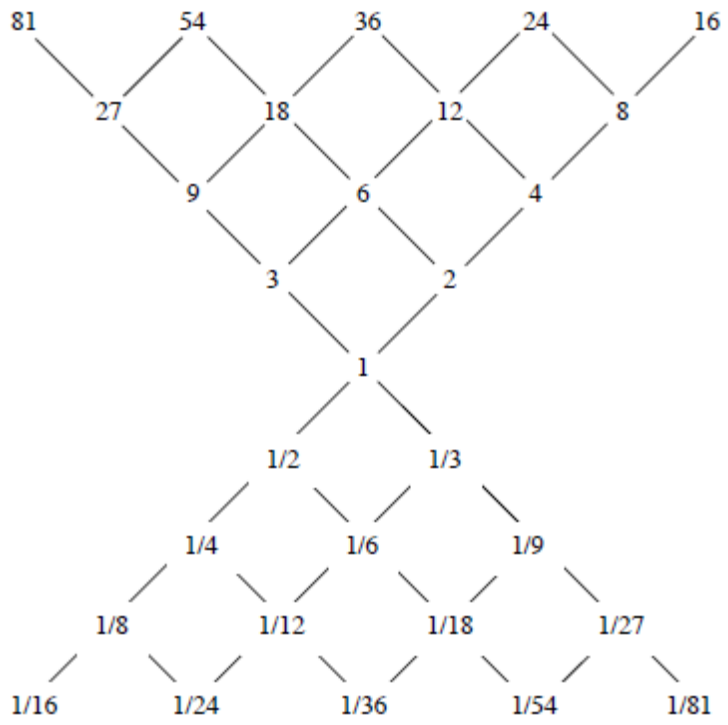

Figure 4.1. *Zeitnetz* for mapping metric organization.

Such an approach removes the inherent difficulty in terms of discussion about rhythm and (especially) meter in many film music analyses: the potential inaccuracy resulting from transcription

[5] Justin London, Cognitive Constraints on Metric Systems: Some Observations and Hypotheses," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 19, 4 (2002), 534-39. Another name for these cognitive pulses proposed by London is *inter onset interval* (*IOI*).

[6] Ibid. 535-37.

bias/decisions in the absence of a printed score. Tracing the perceived grouping(s), divisions(s), and subdivision(s) of a given cue—and, especially, identifying changed in these mappings in subsequent modifications of a theme or similar excerpt—can reflect alterations in the states of characters, settings, plot, etc., within the narrative. Additionally, such rhythmic modifications can be expressed as changes in proportional states between corresponding melodic/thematic durations with respect to a prevailing tactus, rather than a direct comparison of chosen notated rhythms.

Realistic vs. fantastic spaces in narrative and meter

The connection between a uniform identity and/or a shift in meter from duple to triple groupings has been shown to have historical antecedents in the nineteenth century, particularly in the genre of opera. Hugh MacDonald has traced the correlation of triple meter with narrative connotations of "sensuousness and mysterious ecstasy," citing excerpts from such works as Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* and *L'Africaine*, Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, and Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*, amongst others.[7] MacDonald further posits "[t]hat the association of the softer, expressive feelings . . . was supported by the widespread cultivation of triple meters and triplet subdivisions of the bar as the bearers of expressive flexibility."[8] Daphne Leong echoes this sentiment, identifying narrative associations of reality and truth with duple meters, while representations of deception, evil designs, and the supernatural within Humperdinck's *Hänsel and Gretel* are more commonly set to triple meters.[9] Leong identifies similar shifts in metric states in Wagner's *Parsifal*, summarizing that "[m]usic and drama are also closely intertwined in both works. Both composers center their musical and dramatic action on leitmotifs whose musical characteristics change in correspondence to dramatic and

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[7] Hugh MacDonald, "[G-Flat Major Key Signature]," *19th-Century Music*, 11, 3 (1988), 226. MacDonald's discussion of triple meter is used in conjunction with the emergence of G♭ major as a unique tonal center, separated from its enharmonic equivalent—and more prevalently used—F♯ major.

[8] Ibid. 231.

[9] Daphne Leong, "Humperdinck and Wagner: Metric States, Symmetries, and Systems," *Journal of Music Theory*, 51, 2 (2007), 222.

psychological developments; rhythmic-metric transformations form one aspect of this kind of musical depiction."[10]

Juan Chattah draws connections between rhythmic/metric perception and bodily affordances, identifying the physical and physiological responses to cyclical patterns of organization. Additionally, Chattah notes the cultural and ethnomusicological influence of folk songs (or, perhaps more appropriately named, work songs) and their pairing with physical labor. Such songs tend to be in duple meter, producing a synchronous harmony with the symmetrical body. The resultant assumption of cultural significance of duple groupings creates a distinct cognitive and social dissonance for conflicting triple organizations:

> To the duple organization of sound events during physical labor (**one**-two, **one**-two, etc.), cycles of three (**one**-two-three, **one**-two-three, etc.) present a stark opposition. Coincidentally (or perhaps not), music associated with activities not related to labor (dancing a waltz, singing a lullaby) is characterized by a triple metric pattern. As a result, bodily engagement with music, for work or dancing, results in a cultural construct that serves to delineate social boundaries.[11]

This notion of cultural separation between cyclical metric patterns pairs with the Burtonian narrative dichotomy between the fantastic and real, and Elfman's music frequently encapsulates these distinct separations. As depicted in Figure 4.2, Elfman's music tends to associate duple metric patterns with elements of reality (physical), while triple metric patterns are more closely associated with elements of fantasy (nonphysical or psychological). Additionally, any pronounced and prolonged shifts in metric patterns, especially from previously established leitmotivic ideas or recurring accompaniment figures, from one pattern to its counterpart corresponds to a significant shift in narrative—either character, setting, psychological state, or other element(s) central to the diegesis. The "degree of deflection"—the amount of layers which have shifted within a cue—correspond to the extent of transformation in narrative states. There is no direct correlation between distinct levels of metric

[10] Ibid. 241.

[11] Juan Chattah, "Film as Embodiment," in *Embodied Cognition and Cinema*, eds. Maarten Coëgnarts and Peter Kravanja (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 103, emphasis in original.

patterns and specific elements of narrative, but duple/triple groupings on the level of the meter (2, 3, or 4 on the *Zeitnetz*) tend to deal with physical character associations, while submetric associations may relate to physical or more frequently psychological character states, or settings.

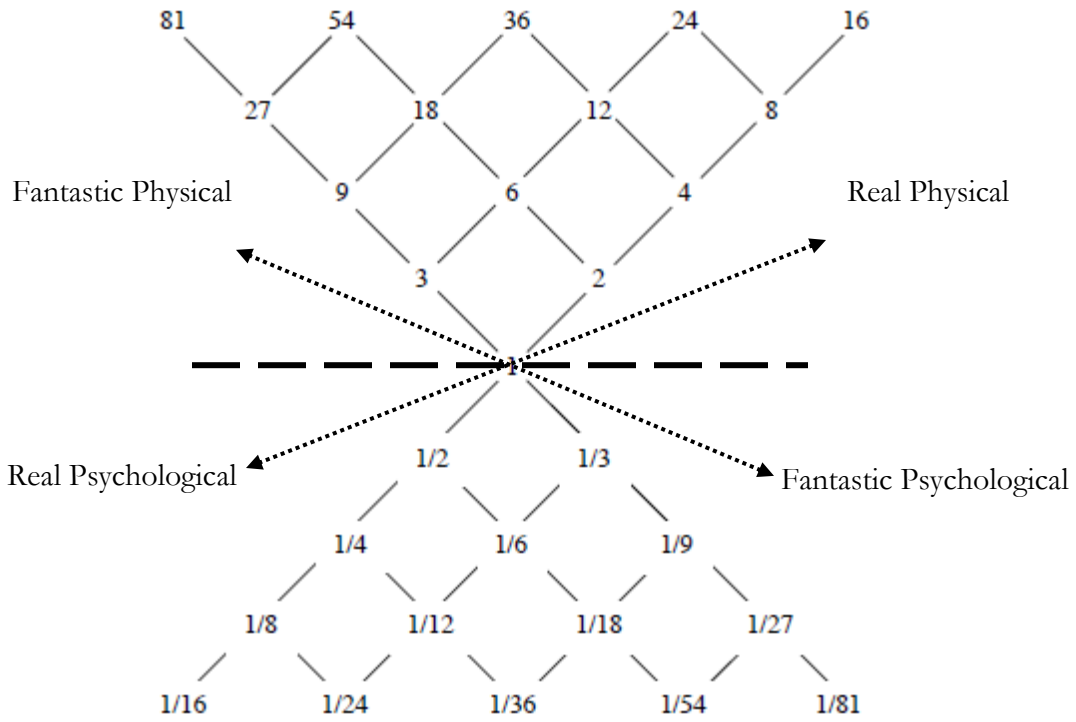


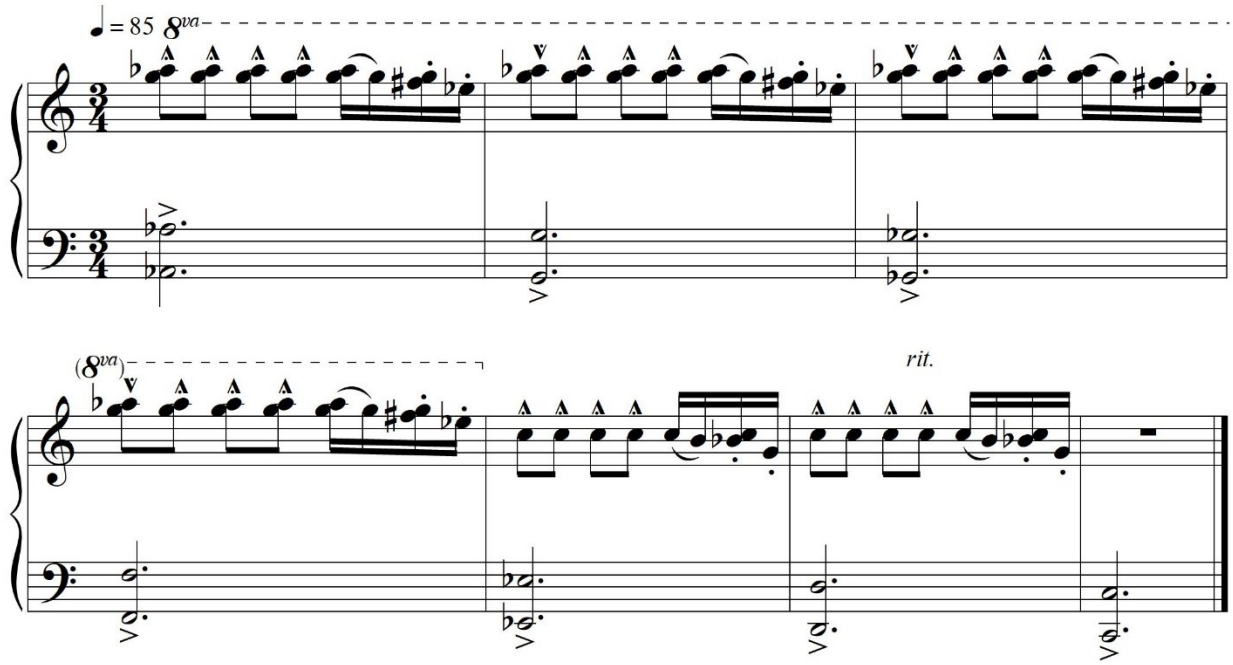
Figure 4.2. *Zeitnetz* representation of temporo-spatial relationship of real and fantastic spaces of metric organization.

Prior to *Batman*, the use of duple and triple meters as a means of separating real and fantastic spaces in the diegesis had been established as recurring elements. Pee-Wee's first foray into the public world during a shopping trip utilizes a submetric triple pattern, emphasizing his psychological disconnect from the reality which surrounds him and preserving his fantastic mental space.[12] The triple

[12] It must be noted that this is not the first instance of triple divisions in the score. After Pee-Wee awakens in the morning, a record begins playing when he pulls his alarm clock. The song is largely in the style of "Let's Sing a Gay Little Song" from the film *Bambi*, but the orchestration and stereo sound suggests that it is a more contemporary recording, possibly by Elfman himself. Once Pee-Wee leaves his attic bedroom (which has been previously discussed as a spatial metaphor for his fantastic childhood mind with respect to character mentality and diegesis), the orchestration swells to the fore, serving as a segue when Pee-Wee enters the kitchen to initiate his Rube Goldberg machine that prepares breakfast. Because the song receives no specific mention of composer or reference in either the soundtrack or end credits, it has been removed from this discussion concerning its relationship to submetric diegetic articulation of fantastic spaces, despite the use of triple grouping structures and the likely plausibility of Elfman's involvement in the composition of the piece.

division remains present when Pee-Wee explores Mario's Magic Shop and is enticed with the newest assortment of novelties, as the circus-like march preserves the carnival atmosphere and Pee-Wee's childlike curiosity despite the judgmental glares from the more adult onlookers. Upon entering the bike shop, however, where Pee-Wee becomes more engaged in both serious business transactions and more mature activities such as the acknowledgement and eventual denial of the amorous affection of the female attendant (Dottie), the triple division becomes noticeably absent. When engaged with the "real world" and attending to serious matters which cannot be resolved by his childish persona, the triple subdivision which dominates his conscious (and subconscious) subsides.

Upon his return to the supposed location of his beloved bicycle, however, Pee-Wee discovers that his precious vehicle has been stolen. The traumatic discovery not only disrupts his delicate psychological state but also brings the adventure and situation directly into a harsh reality as he comprehends the severity of the situation. Despite the obvious manifestations of his mind attempting to distort his sense of reality, such as the clown statue changing its facial features to apparently mock Pee-Wee at his recent misfortune, the scene establishes a grave reality for the protagonist as his prized possession is no longer in his world. Paralleling this discovering is a return of the descending scalar line from "The Breakfast Machine," incorporating added dissonance to enhance the turmoil felt by Pee-Wee as he processes the scene (See Example 4.1). While the surface harmonic dissonance provides a noticeable and striking change, the metric modification confirms the scene is not simply a nightmare for the protagonist, but in fact an actuality. The melodic fragment shifts the primary metric organization to a triple meter, repeating the gesture multiple times to establish the reality and gravitas of the situation within Pee-Wee's world. By moving the triple organization from a submetric to metric position within its organizational structure (See Figure 4.3), the music helps initiate the central action of the film and bring Pee-Wee from his idyllic, fantasy-riddled home world and into the reality filled with an assortment of strange and dangerous characters that continue either to assist or impede his pursuit for his beloved bicycle.



Musical Example 4.1. Transcription of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, "Stolen Bike" [0:18:54 – 0:19:12].

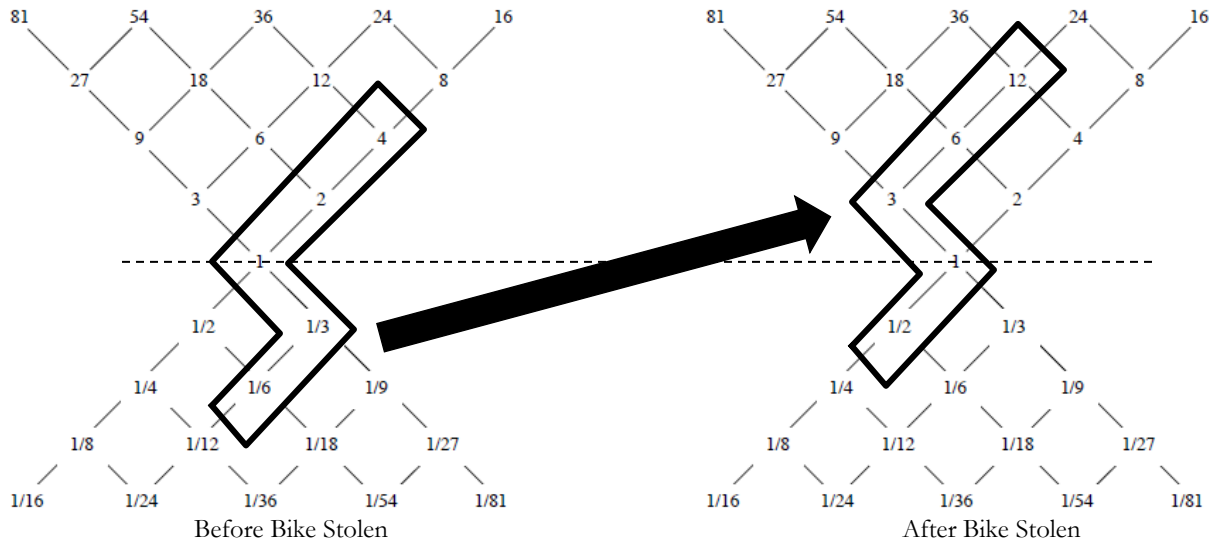


Figure 4.3. Upward metric shift as crossing psychological/physical divide in *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*.

The emergence of the titular character in *Beetlejuice* as he wreaks havoc on the Deetz household and its inhabitants displays the issues of both the physical/psychological divide as well as the gap between real and fantastic spaces in the narrative. Seeking to prove his worth as a "Bio-Exorcist" to

the Maitlands and scare away the humans, Betelgeuse transforms into a large snake and begins assaulting all the members of the house (see Example 4.2). The scene in its horror-comedy confluence presents a duality for both the living and the deceased: Betelgeuse is attempting to cross over and rejoin the world of the living so he may continue his hijinks in another realm, while the Deetzes (and their companion, Otho) are trying to comprehend the monstrosity before them, presenting a cognitive dissonance between a real and fantastic psychological (and potentially physical) threat within their home. With the Beetle-Snake confronting the metric diegetic space in all four quadrants, it freely toggles back and forth as the grouping structures literally slither with the shifting accentuation (see Figure 4.4), mirroring the snake-like motion of the antagonist as he closes in upon the family patriarch.

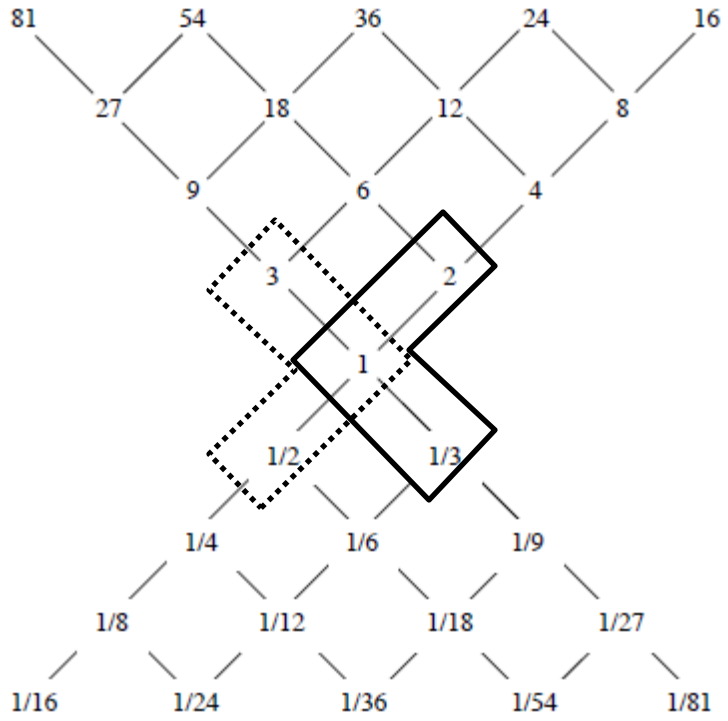
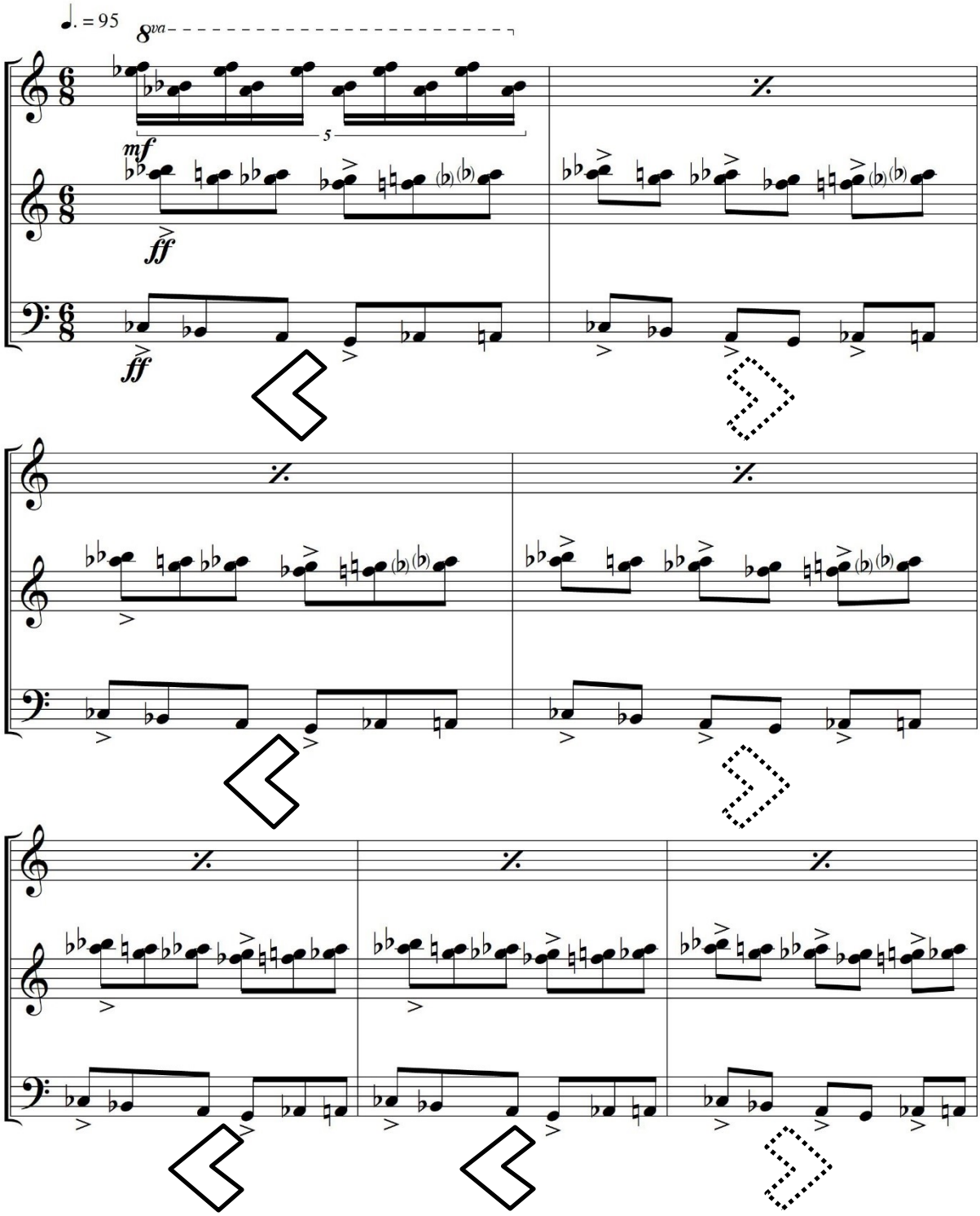
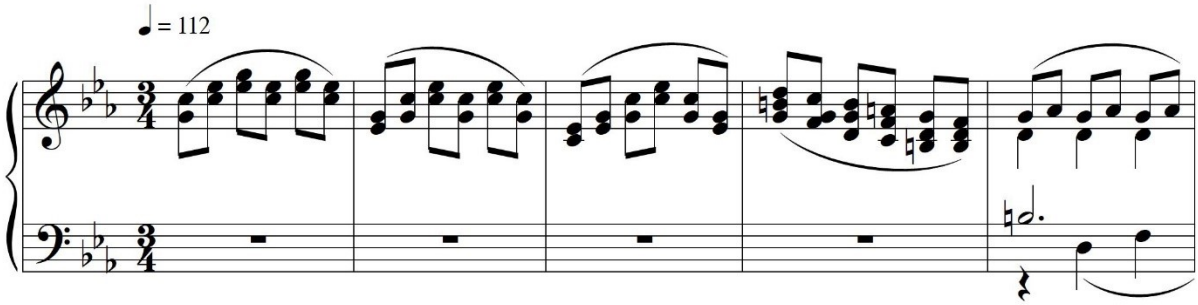


Figure 4.4. Toggling metric/submetric organizations in "Beetle-Snake."



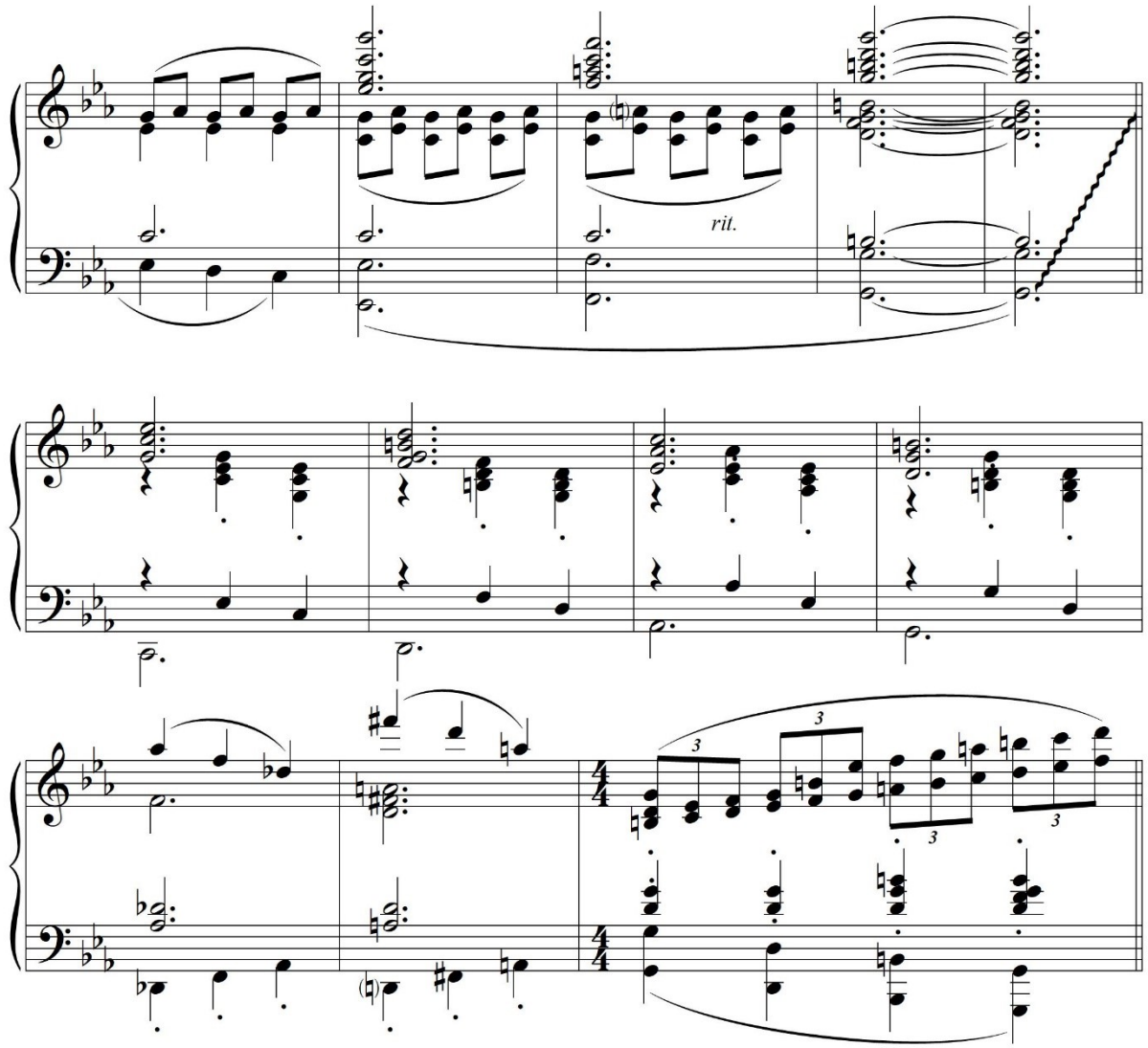
Music Example 4.2. Transcription of *Beetlejuice*, "Beetle-Snake" [1:00:13 – 1:00:22] with metric "slithering" below measures.

Establishing a filmworld as fantastic from the outset, such as the telling of a contemporary fairy tale, has been achieved through forming a primary triple metric meter during the main title sequence transcribed below in Example 4.3. The filmgoer is brought into the world of *Edward Scissorhands* as the camera descends and approaches a decrepit wooden door, opening wide and revealing the remains of a mansion with the masonry, machinery, and statues covered in cobwebs. As the camera continues to zoom out to reveal the full building in the distance on the hill, shrouded in the falling snow, it settles upon an elderly woman observing the building, reminiscing in her home as her granddaughter calls for a bedtime story. The elderly woman begins to relay the story of the title character, setting the film's primary events into action. It is revealed by the close of the film that the fairy tale, though fantastic in its inherent nature, is in fact a true story within the filmworld, one experienced by the woman herself. The fantastic physical diegetic space is prepared for the young girl (and the filmgoer) during the opening title sequence, establishing the whimsical world which forms the basis for the eventual "reality" of the woman's memories. Further weakening the sense of a "present reality" within the narrative is the elderly woman's refusal to visit the title character in his mansion upon the hill, desiring for him to remember only as she was in the past—and preserve that token fantasy which serves as the foundation for the fairy tale itself.



Music Example 4.3. Transcription of *Edward Scissorhands*, "Main Titles" [0:00:15 – 0:00:42].[13]

[13] The use of a $\frac{4}{4}$ measure is primarily for timing during the title sequence, allowing the text to disappear from the frame before the interior of the mansion appears in the next shot. The remainder of the main titles sequence preserves the triple meter, negating any affect this measure may have in disrupting the overall metric design and acting as an aberration due to filmic timing.

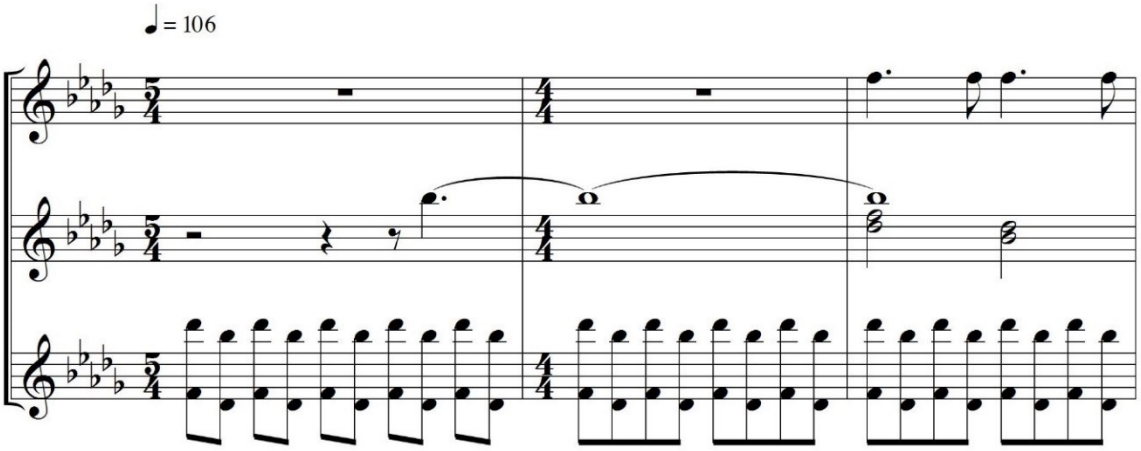


Music Example 4.3, continued.

Torn between two loves: *Corpse Bride* and the real/fantasy spaces and characters

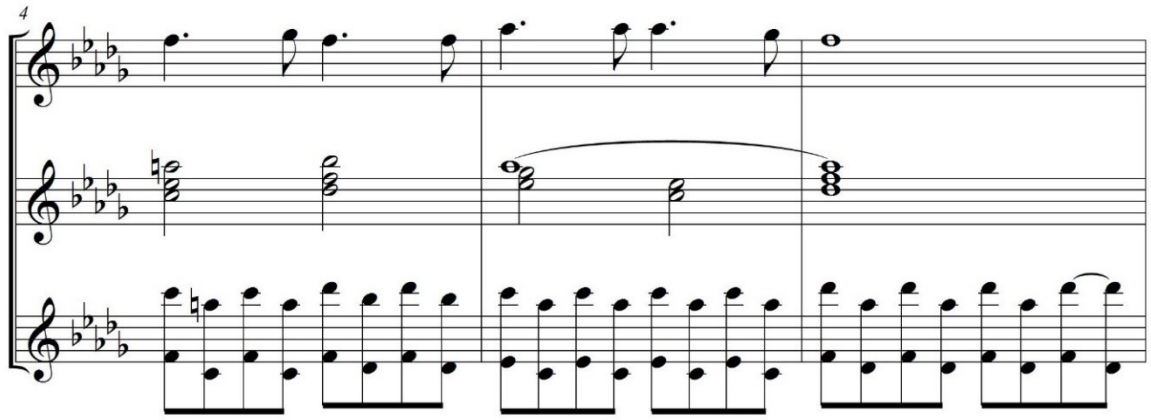
The use of submetric triple groupings to express a sense of "otherness"—in particular, the differentiation between the lands of the living and of the deceased—is utilized extensively in *Corpse Bride* and in the metric transformations associated with the principal theme for the protagonist Victor. The film opens in a small Victorian village within the house of Victor Van Dort and his family; a marriage has been arranged between the son of the *nouveau riche* fish merchant and Victoria Everglot, the daughter of once well-to-do aristocrats whose family has fallen on hard financial times in need of

the arranged marriage to return to blue-blooded status. The main title sequence presents Victor alone in his room mindlessly pondering his impending nuptials prior to his first-ever meeting with his future wife; with no other characters or alternative psychological states introduced thus far through the filmworld, Victor's theme is introduced in a strong duple meter through all layers, establishing a sense of relative reality for the setting and narrative (see Example 4.4, Figure 4.5). As the story continues to unfold, however, all the filmworld presents to the filmgoer is the protagonist lost in thought in the gloomy Victorian era town; it is only after the after the opening song "According to Plan" that the aforementioned scenario is provided. The opening $\frac{5}{4}$ measure is a momentary aberration to accommodate the studio logo, appearing only in the film proper but neither in the original printed score nor the commercial soundtrack.[14]



Music Example 4.4. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Main Titles" [0:00:00 – 0:00:14].

[14] The original score contains three measures of $\frac{4}{4}$ with a brief Clarinet II solo before the appearance of Victor's theme; this corresponds with the commercial soundtrack recording of the main titles. The film version, however, deviates from the written score and modifies this beginning as well as omits the clarinet solo, possibly due to changes in timing or duration of the opening sequence. All synchronization cues provided in the score are based on mensural denotations of visual events, not specific time spans. The transcription has been written to reflect the film version of the cue as opposed to the soundtrack version.



Music Example 4.4, continued.

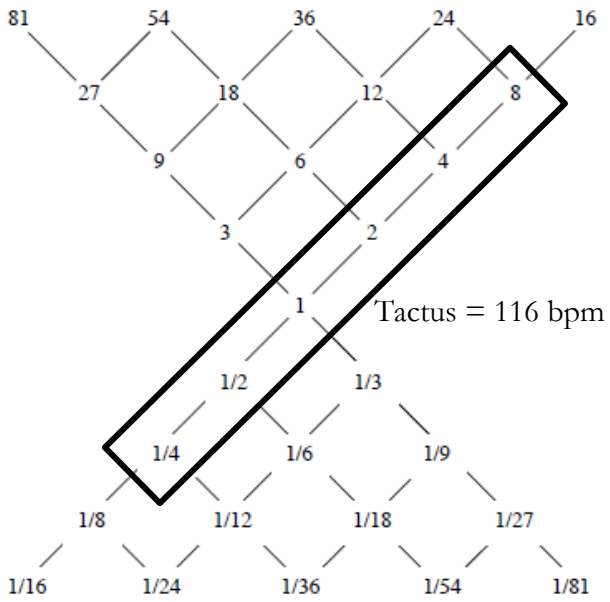
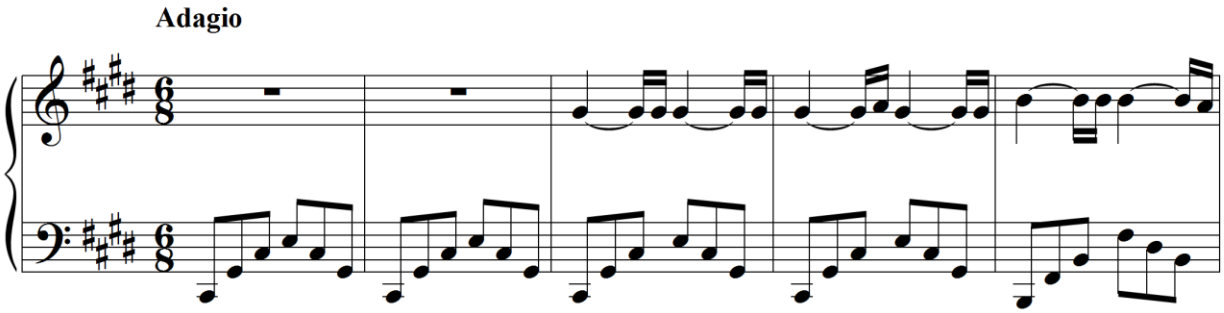


Figure 4.5. *Zeitnetz* depiction of metric relationships in *Corpse Bride*, "Main Titles."

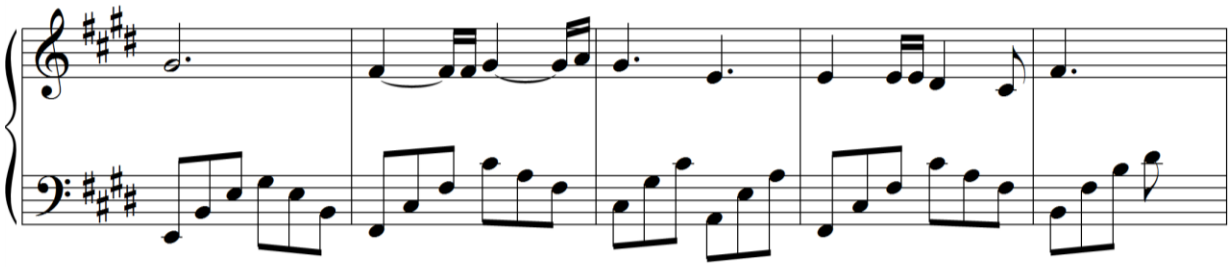
Upon arriving at the Everglot manor and awaiting his introduction to his future wife, Victor sits at the piano and performs his theme once more—a considerably rare instance of a distinctly diegetic setting of Elfman's composed score. A noticeable shift in metric organization has also taken place in this presentation of his theme, corresponding to multiple layers of narrative conflict facing the protagonist as well as the filmgoer. The arranged marriage is met with considerable uneasiness for

Victor as well as the Everglot parents, who view Victor and his family as their inferiors but necessary for their return to social status. The filmgoer, likewise, has been presented a filmworld that has inverted all preconceived expectations of a wedding, utilizing dark and grey hues and strong negative emotions enveloping all participants. Adding to the filmgoer's conflict is the absence of the titular character, for the only bride presented thus far—Victoria—is clearly living.

The resultant metric discrepancy, strengthened by the considerably slow tempo in the beginning of the cue transcribed in Example 4.5a, produces a compound duple meter, but the perceived identification of the tactus adds to the tension of the scene. The longer pulse, a rhythmic value of ♩. in the provided transcription, is approximately 48 bpm (an IOI of 1250 ms) extends well below the natural comfortable limit of tactus identification (80-120 bpm, or 500-750 ms). The shorter notated pulse (♪) also extends beyond the upper boundaries of London's limits (144 bpm, or 416.67 ms). The melodic shaping of the accompaniment and the longer duration of the theme, especially when compared to its first appearance in the film, place primary emphasis on the slower (♩.) pulse, identified in Figure 4.6, which suggests a metric design of a duple meter with triple divisions. The rhythmic modification of the theme to extend the length the duration of the longer note values and the corresponding effect on the shorter durations results in the juxtaposition of a duple subdivision over the triple division, hinting at the internal conflict within Victor as he performs alone in the foyer.



Music Example 4.5a. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Victor's Piano Solo" [0:08:02 – 0:08:26].



Music Example 4.5a, continued.

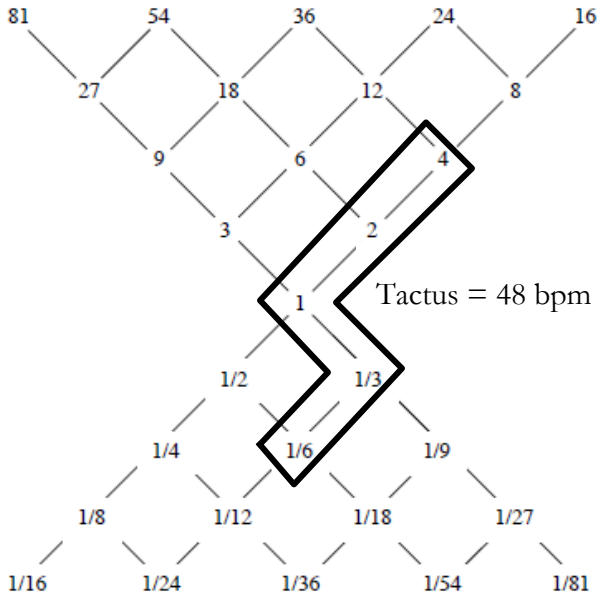
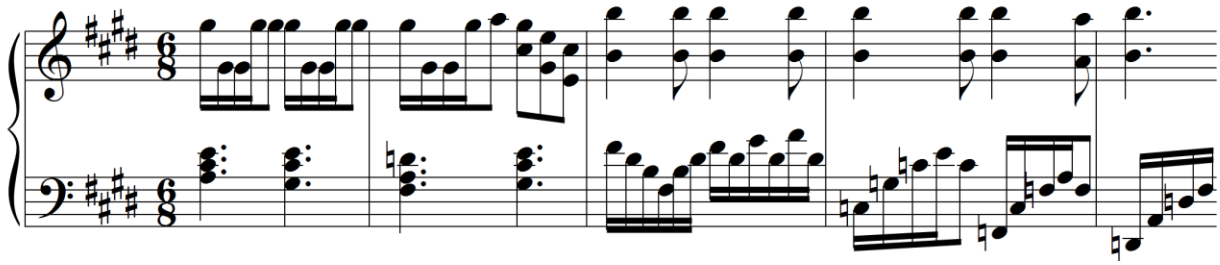


Figure 4.6. *Zeitnetz* depiction of *Corpse Bride*, "Victor's Piano Solo."

As the music transitions from the traditionally defined terms of diegetic to nondiegetic, it becomes background to Victoria as she prepares for her first appearance before Victor and the Van Dorts. Simultaneously, the transition from Victor to Victoria as the image-centric character is paired with a distinct shift in melodic construction, removing the tactus ambiguity created by the elongated melodic pitches and articulating a clearly delineated compound duple meter. This dissolve of metric ambiguity becomes most clear as Victoria exits her room and enters the foyer, entering Victor's physical space and observing his performance from a distance (see Example 4.5b). Paired with the introduction of the submetric triple divisions, the *Zeitnetz* becomes a spatio-temporal metaphor which

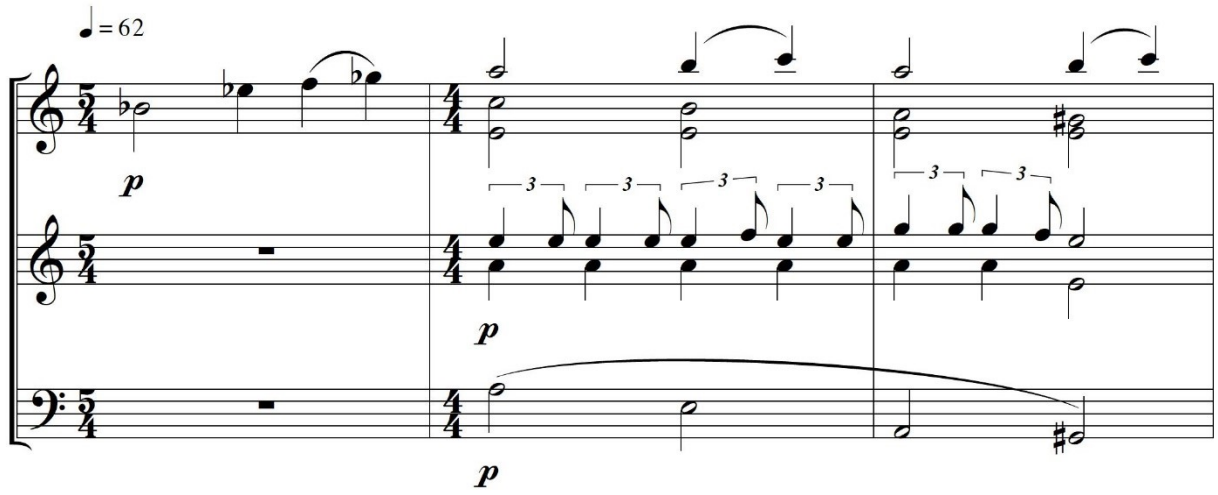
identifies Victoria's metric space as "literally" elevated—associated with duple grouping structures on the metric and hypermetric level. Any associations with Victoria in submetric space remain along the "reality" axis of duplicity and do not deviate from this fixed point. As the rhythmic activity of the accompaniment increases and Victor becomes more engulfed in submetric space, Victoria comes closer and accidently disturbs him, bringing an abrupt end to his performance.



Music Example 4.5b. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Victor's Piano Solo" [0:08:52 – 0:09:03].

Victoria's intrusion into the scene and the musical landscape, dominated by triple divisions, further emphasizes that the triple submetric area of the *Zeitnetz* represents a forbidden boundary where Victoria cannot physically or musically exist. When situated in the spatio-temporal model with the *Zeitnetz,* this would denote that submetric space—more specifically, *triple submetric divisions* in any capacity—are directly related to the Underworld and the physical space of the unseen Corpse Bride.

Following an unsuccessful rehearsal that places the entire ceremony in doubt, Victor flees in panic and leaves the manor, finding solace on the outskirts of the town. Hearing the town crier make a mockery of his failures, Victor ponders the fate of his lost love while staring at a piece of a withered floral arrangement. There is a complete return of the principal theme, provided in the reduction in Example 4.6, but the primary melodic material is firmly grounded in a compound (triple) feel. The slow tempo (♩ = 62) establishing the tactus and placement of the theme as early principal material within the cue and marks this moment as the first unambiguous statement of the associative theme in a primarily triple meter.



Music Example 4.6. Reduction of *Corpse Bride*, "Into the Forest," mm. 1-3.

This brief moment on the bridge serves as a significant period of foreshadowing for Victor as he is eventually drawn into the woods on the opposite side of the town. The dead twig in his hand closely resembles an elongated, skeletal finger from Burton's drawings and previous works—as well as the finger he will accidently place the wedding band upon and summon the Corpse bride. Additionally, he is standing above the tranquil blue water, a rare instance of color and the one associated with the decaying skin of his decaying wife-to-be. The filmworld unites the visual and aural cues as the woods beckon the protagonist into the clearing where he will meet the third member of the marriage triangle and the alternate world where she dwells.

Taken collectively, these first three appearances of the primary theme form a musical triptych for the three central characters in the film and their relationships to the physical spaces in which they exist. The submetric articulations contained within the first measure of the theme in the alternation of long-short patterns of the first two notes expresses a configuration of ratios that corresponds with the characters' physical boundaries and their associations and freedoms with these worlds, summarized in Figure 4.7a. When first presented in the opening titles, the opening figure (♩. ♪) utilizes a 3:1 ratio (sum 4) and remains entirely along the duple-reality axis; occurring entirely in the town amongst the living and just prior to meeting the living bride, this duple space belongs solely to Victoria. Its second appearance incorporates a 5:1 pattern (♩‿♪ ♪) (sum 6), a potential for both duple and triple

groupings. Moreover, this second appearance is the most atypical use of the theme in its entire presentation within the filmworld: its diegetic setting and considerably slow tactus are unique for thematic appearances across the film. Less foreshadowing and more direct application of cognitive dissonance for both filmgoer and film protagonist, this dual potential of duple-triple boundaries comes to symbolize the performer of the music itself, Victor. Additionally, Victor remains the lone character of the film who appears capable of freely traversing the physical boundaries between the lands of the living and deceased without consequence. The third appearance of the theme returns to the use of foreshadowing, and its use of a 2:1 ratio (𝅗𝅥 𝅘𝅥) (sum 3) creates a distinct, unambiguous triple division structure that augurs the appearance of the titular Corpse Bride. While both female characters utilize subdivisions within their appropriations of the principal theme, their interactions with Victor require a discrete shift *away* from their established divisional axis towards the neutral (sum 6) location, where Victor is precariously balanced between the two women and their respective worlds (see Figure 4.7b).

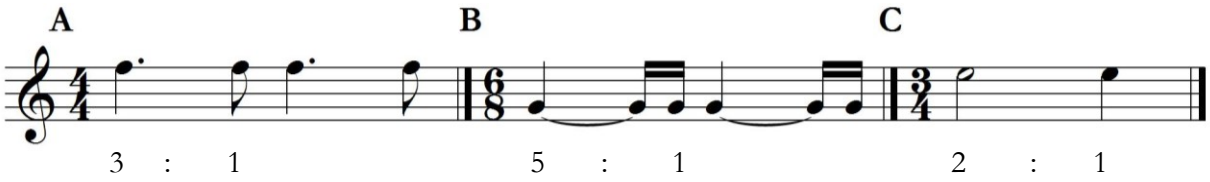


Figure 4.7a. Comparison of long-short patterns of "Victoria" (A) "Victor" (B) and "Corpse Bride" (C) ratios of main theme.

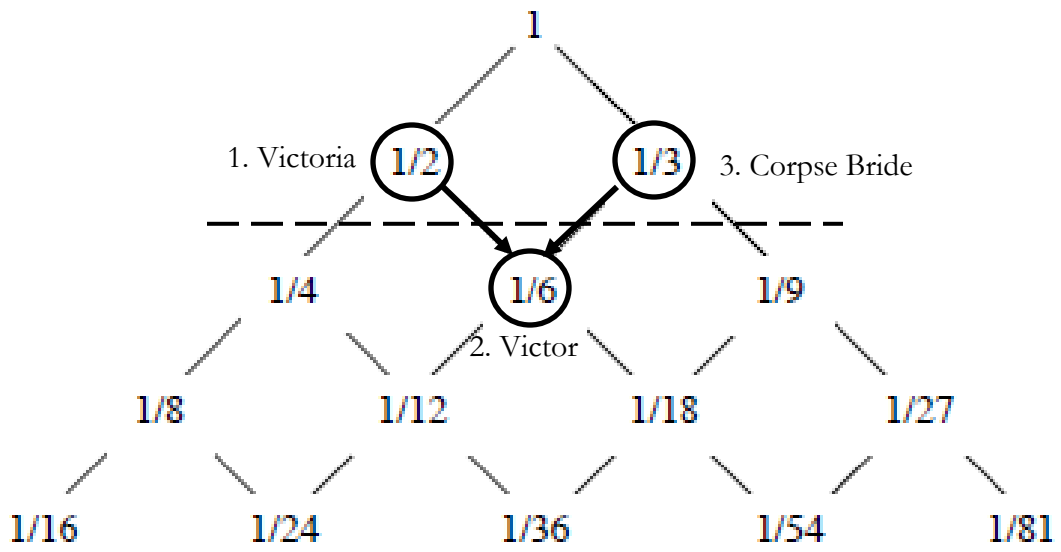
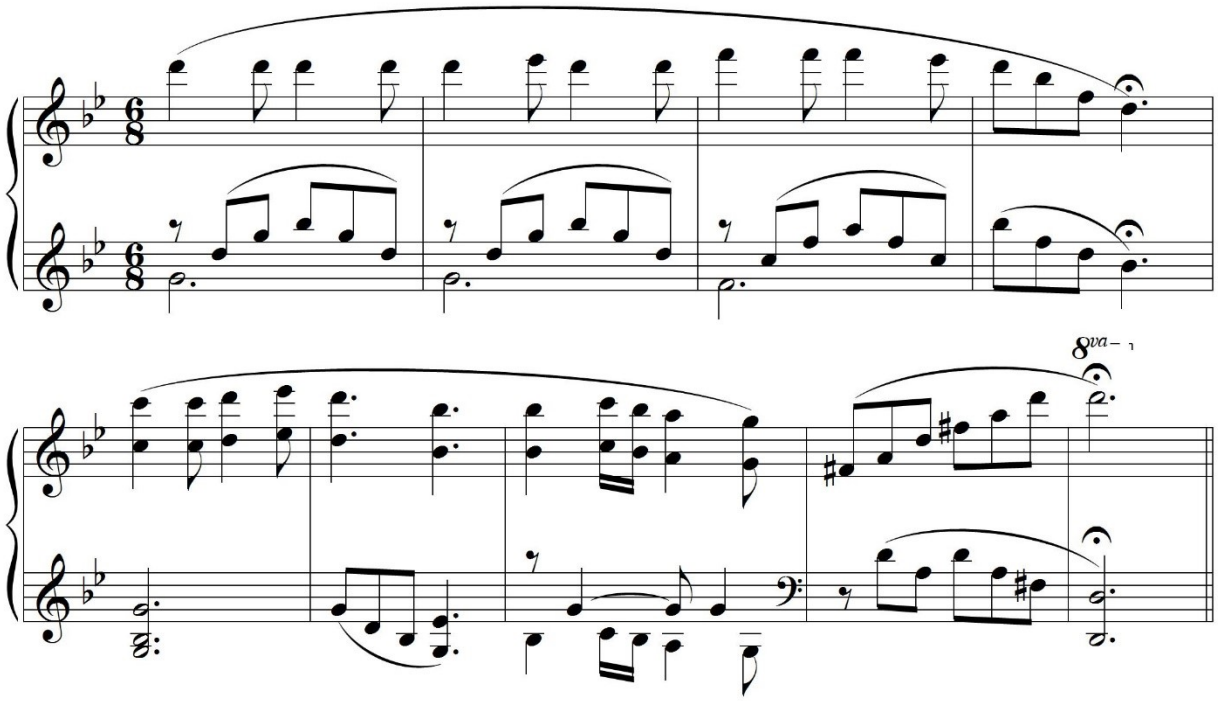


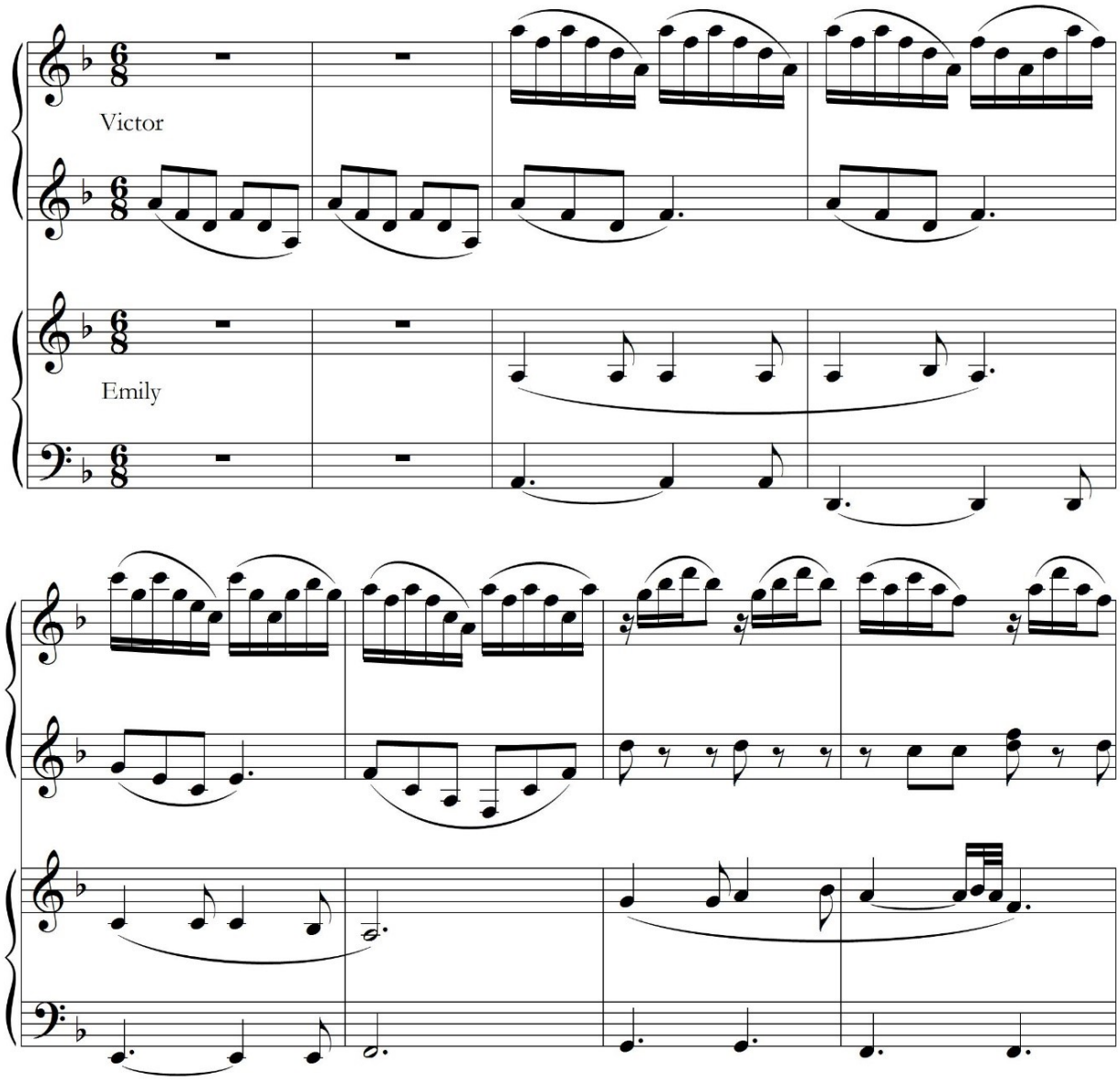
Figure 4.7b. *Zeitnetz* submetric representation of "marriage triangle" and thematic divisions.

Following the debacle in the land of the living and the failed first encounter between Emily and Victoria, Victor attempts to reconcile and improve his relationship with his accidental wife. He finds her sitting alone at a piano—an even rarer occurrence of a second diegetic setting of Elfman's score—performing a variation of her verse from the song "Tears to Shed," set in a compound meter. Joining her at the piano, Victor makes his first real efforts to connect with Emily through music, playing the main theme (see Example 4.7a). His performance combines the clear melodic triple divisions first heard foreshadowing the corpse bride's resurrection, while the accompaniment recalls the arpeggiated figure incorporated in the first diegetic cue in Victoria's home. Though performed by Victor, the overemphasis of the triple divisions and their previous narratological associations to Emily help bridge the emotional distance between the two; the first phrase is met with a slight scowl and turn away from his body, while the second phrase is met with a more intrigued smirk and acknowledgement of his genuine efforts. Pleased that her husband is at least trying for once to interact with her genuinely—done so through the use of an explicit setting of "her" association to the main theme—Emily soon joins in and performs a duet with Victor.

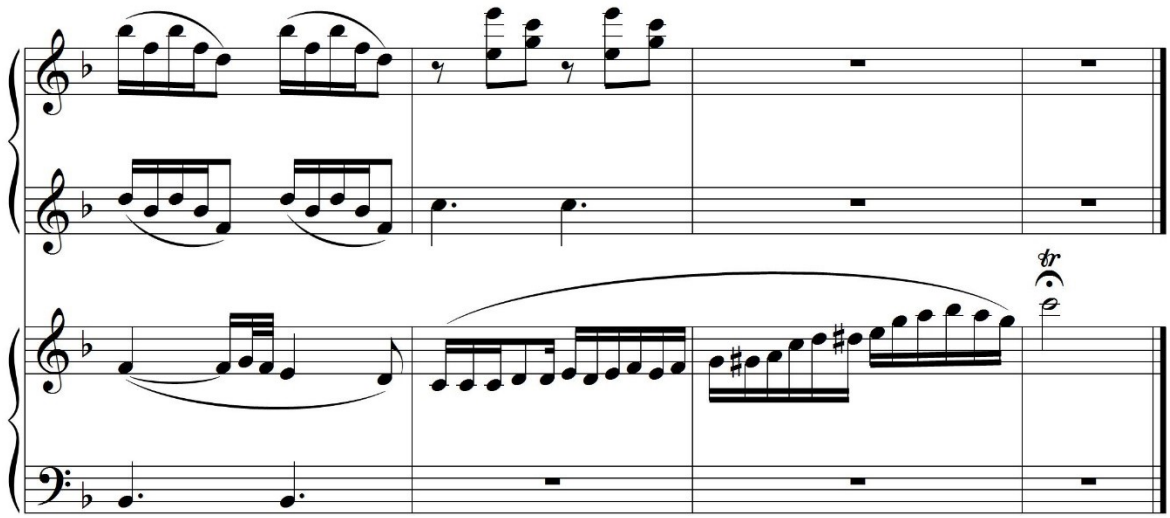


Music Example 4.7a. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Piano Duet" [0:51:14 – 0:51:27].

Seeing his genuine efforts to apologize for his dishonesty and deception, Emily assumes the primary melodic material, while Victor's role becomes accompaniment (see Example 4.7b). This particular setting of the principal theme combines the spatio-temporal model with registral settings to create a multi-faceted acoustic metaphor for the couple: Emily of the Underworld reiterates "her" version in a significantly low register, while the living Victor provides "his" accompaniment from the much earlier solo (utilizing 1/6 divisions of the tactus) in a much higher register. As a sign of unification between the two, Emily's hand breaks free and performs a brief solo that ventures into both Victor's rhythmic and registral territory. This brief moment not only serves to break the literal/metaphorical distance between the two, but also unite them as a couple for the first time; her hand, with wedding band clearly visible and emphasized, climbs up Victor's arm and shoulder as the music moves to the background over the trill, which Victor coyly reattaches whilst flirting.



Music Example 4.7b. Transcription of *Corpse Bride*, "Piano Duet" [0:51:29 – 0:51:53].



Music Example 4.7b, continued.

Metric dissonance as character or narratological dissonance

Because multiple layers of metrical activity are occurring simultaneously, the potential for disparate-sounding metrical patterns arises where noncongruent layers do not coincide. Such instances, termed by Harald Krebs as *metrical dissonance*, may involve the nonalignment of equivalent cardinality layers (a *displacement* dissonance), or the superposition of two nonequivalent cardinality layers which are neither factors or multiples of each other (*grouping* dissonance).[15] Krebs traces this use of metric dissonance in the music of Robert Schumann, identifying the interconnectivity of such elements with textual or narrative states in songs. Krebs notes, "By far, the most common function of metrical dissonance in Schumann's songs . . . is the reflection of emotional or psychological states, particularly those of a violent nature; the dissonance in these cases suggests the loss of control associated with these states."[16] Not only directly associated with musical and textual events, but Krebs further postulates that the

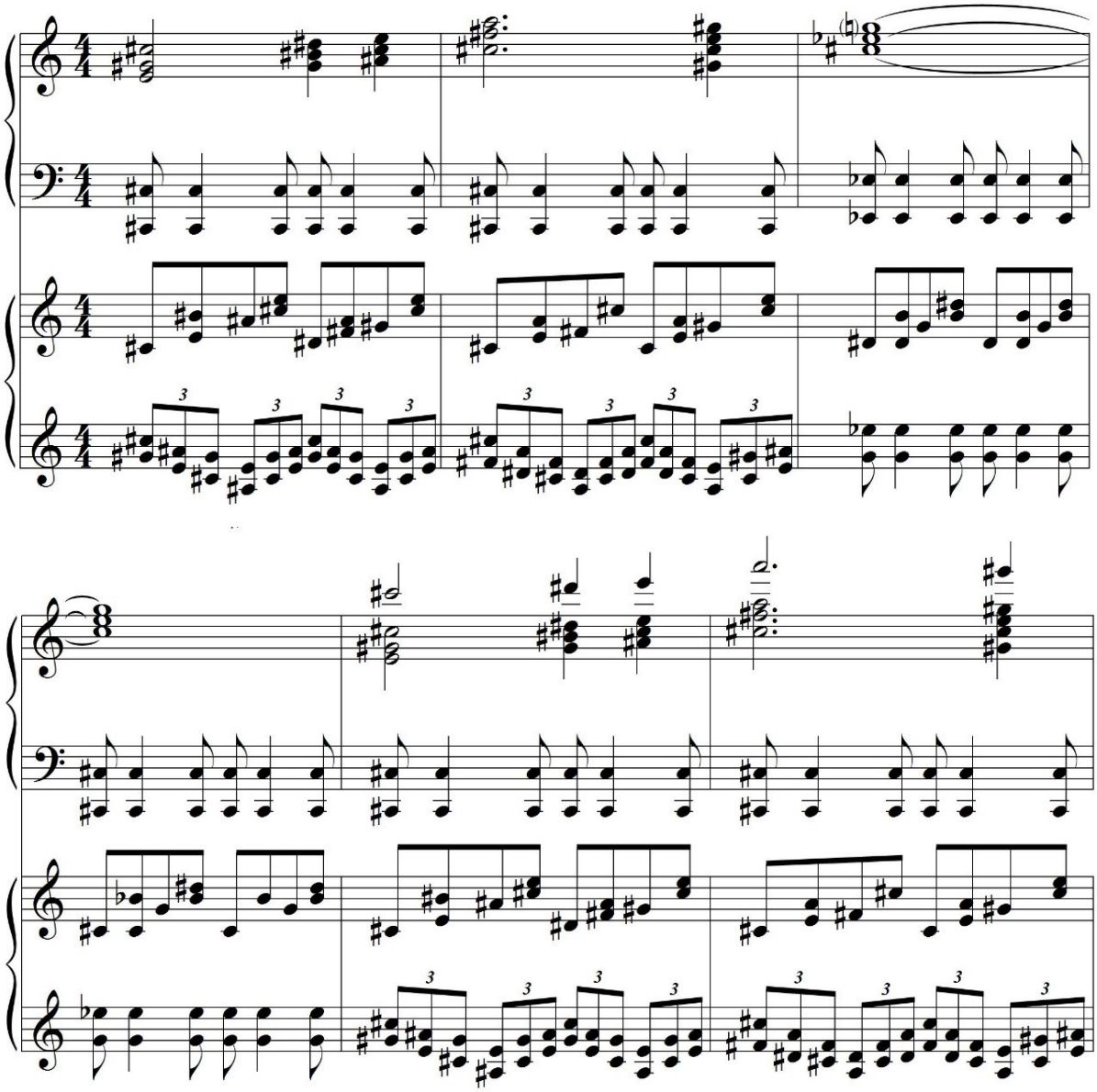
[15] Definitions summarized from Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 29-33.

[16] Ibid. 161. Krebs, however, does not limit all possibilities to negative associations. He identifies the continuous sixteenth displacement of Schumann's *Zwölf Gedichte von Justinus Kerner*, op. 35, as an example of a positive emotional state, mimicking the excitement associated with love. Krebs suggests "the consistent use of low-level displacement dissonance results in a sense of excitement, and the jabs of weak-beat accentuation suggest the spurts of adrenalin associated with being happily in love" (161).

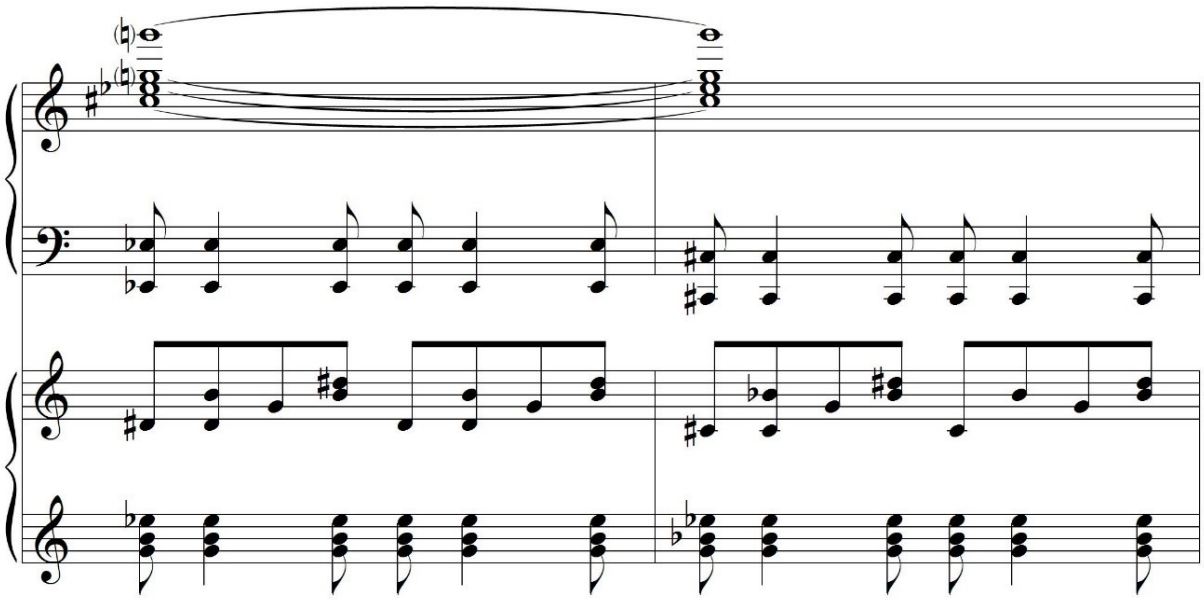
incorporation of metrical dissonance served an extramusical significance for Schumann, particularly through instrumental music; the internal and external conflicts that plagued Schumann manifest themselves in dueling metric states. Krebs summarizes this duality within Schumann's instrumental music, suggesting, "The metrical layers within a particular dissonance are apt symbols for normality, for order, for the objective self . . . whereas the antimetrical layers suggest the abnormal, the irregular and the disorderly, the subjective self."[17]

This sense of duality and extramusical narrative significance is demonstrated through the use of metrical dissonance, especially submetrical grouping dissonance, in Elfman's scores, most notably for characters which display a strong, conflicted sense of duality outside of Burton's original canon. The Bruce/Batman duality of the original *Batman* film introduces this feature briefly in the main title sequence, overlapping duple and triple submetrical pulses accompanying statements of the Bat-theme seen in Example 4.8. This simultaneous pairing of duple (Bruce/Batman, real, lawful) and triple (Joker, fantastic, criminal) elements mirrors a central element to the "Batman ethos:" a vigilante superhero who prevents crime by technically committing crime. To further complicate the complex relationship between Batman and the law, this sense of metric dissonance precedes a prolonged setting of the Bat-theme in triple meter, drawing the Caped Crusader closer to the criminal underworld he is fighting.

[17] Ibid. 172. Krebs defines *antimetrical* layer as an interpreted metrical level which conflicts with at least one other metrical level.

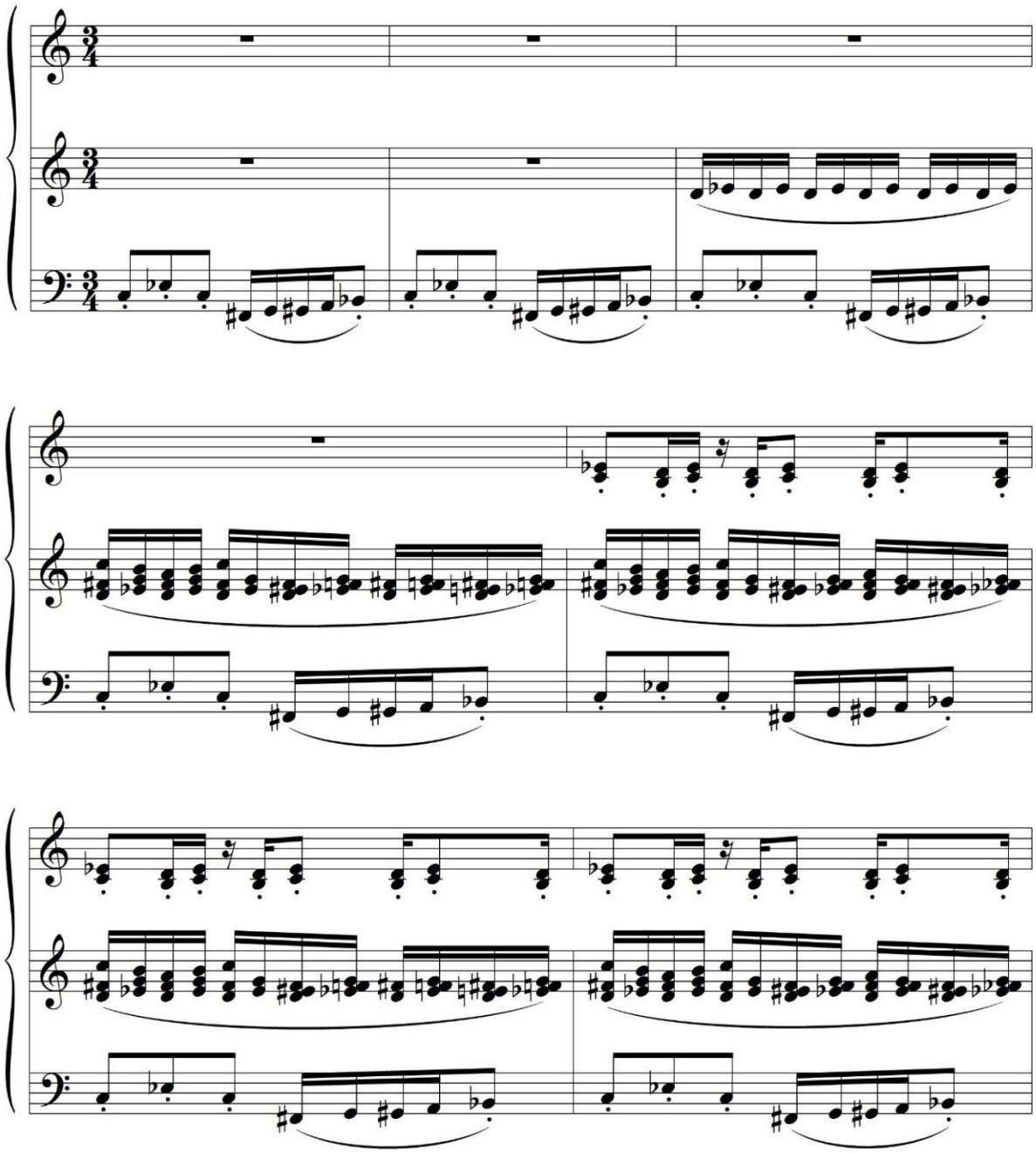


Music Example 4.8. Reduction of *Batman*, "Main Titles," mm. 52-59.



Music Example 4.8, continued.

The showdown between Jack Napier, the police, and Batman at Axis Chemicals which leads to Jack's apparent demise and the birth of the Joker introduces a significant moment of grouping dissonance above the level of the tactus (see Example 4.9). What starts as a predominantly compound duple meter (befitting of the criminal figure central to the scene) begins freely descending into multiple layers of chaos, overlapping ostinati of simple duple and simple triple patterns as Jack runs through the chemical plant, attempting to destroy all evidence of his and Grissom's connections to the facility. The confluence of all patterns in the low strings, woodwinds/upper strings, and trumpets/trombones mirrors the ensuing convergence of the three forces and their respective rhythmic/metric qualities to the diegesis: Jack and his henchmen, as the criminal underbelly, driven through the compound duple pattern; the police, supposedly representing the law—but led by corrupt lieutenant Eckhardt, in the woodwind and upper strings; Batman, the paragon of justice for this scene, in the simple duple brass. These three metric layers and their *Zeitnetz* representations are presented simultaneously and individually in Figures 4.8a and 4.8b.



Music Example 4.9. Reduction of *Batman*, "The Shootout," mm. 9-15.

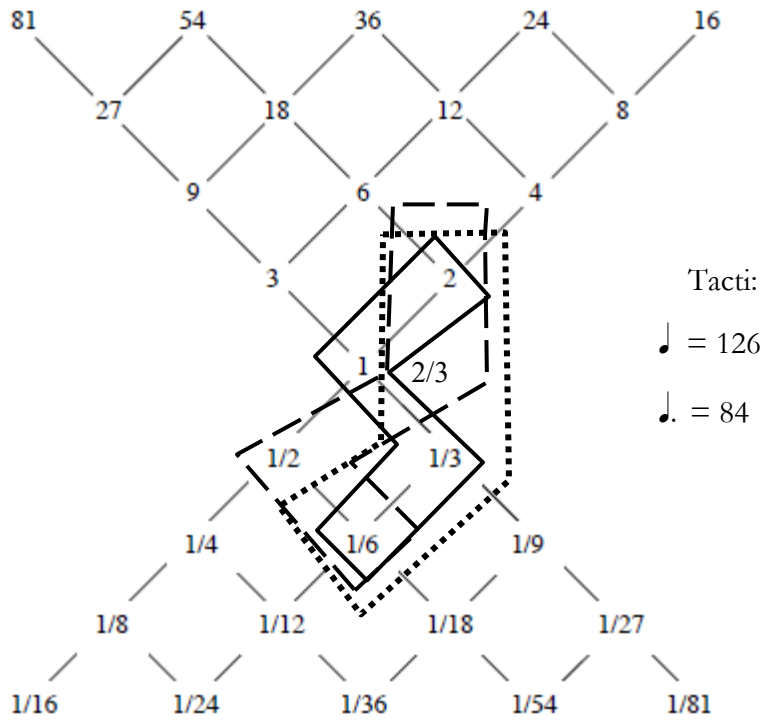


Figure 4.8a. *Zeitnetz* representation of metric dissonance layers in *Batman*, "Shootout," mm. 9-15.

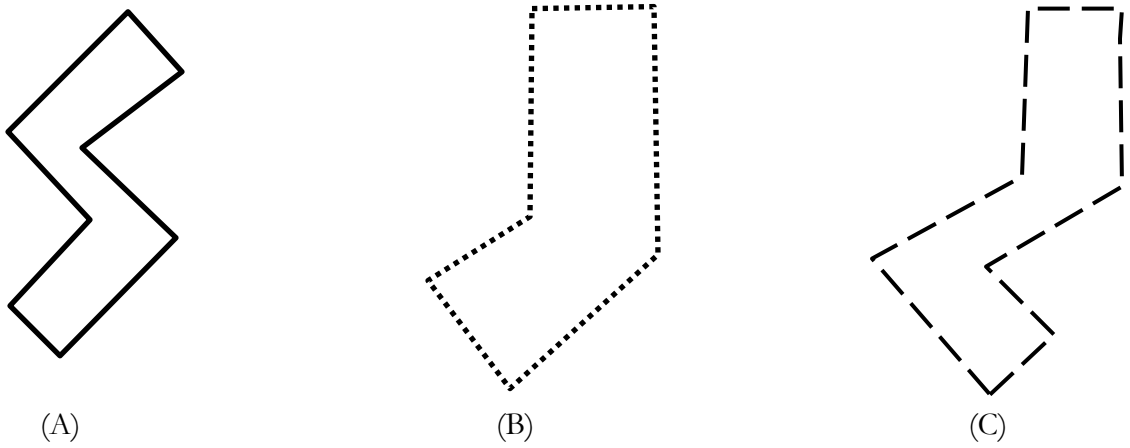
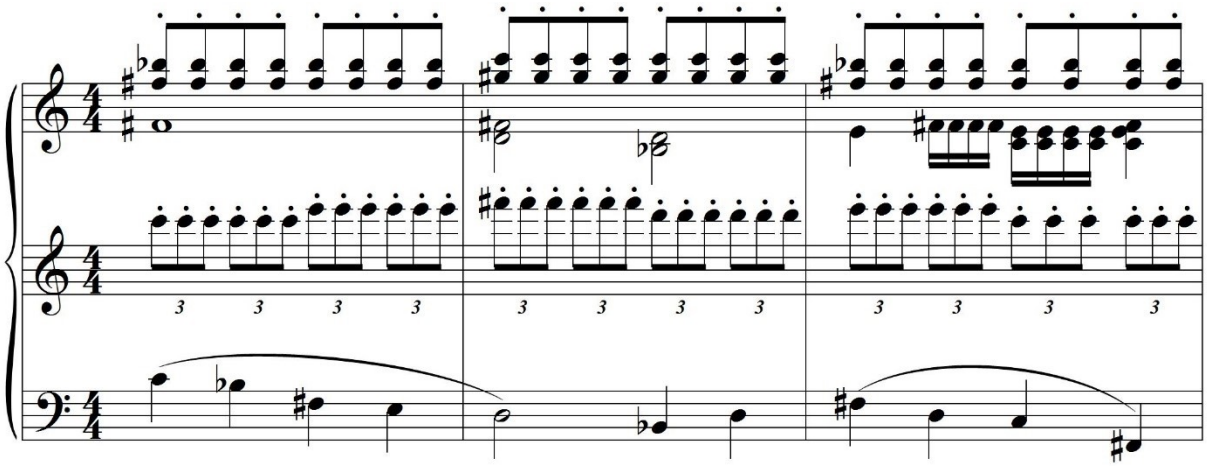


Figure 4.8b. Independent depiction of metrical layers of low strings (A), woodwinds/upper strings (B), and trumpets/trombones (C) on *Zeitnetz* in Figure 4.8a.

The use of submetric dissonance to build psychological tension in the viewer as well as reflect the internal emotional struggle of the protagonist is utilized in the dramatic buildup of the Batmobile chase (see Example 4.10). Having successfully escaped the Joker's henchmen only briefly at the expense of trapping his vehicle, Batman must flee on foot with Vicki, exposing himself and his love

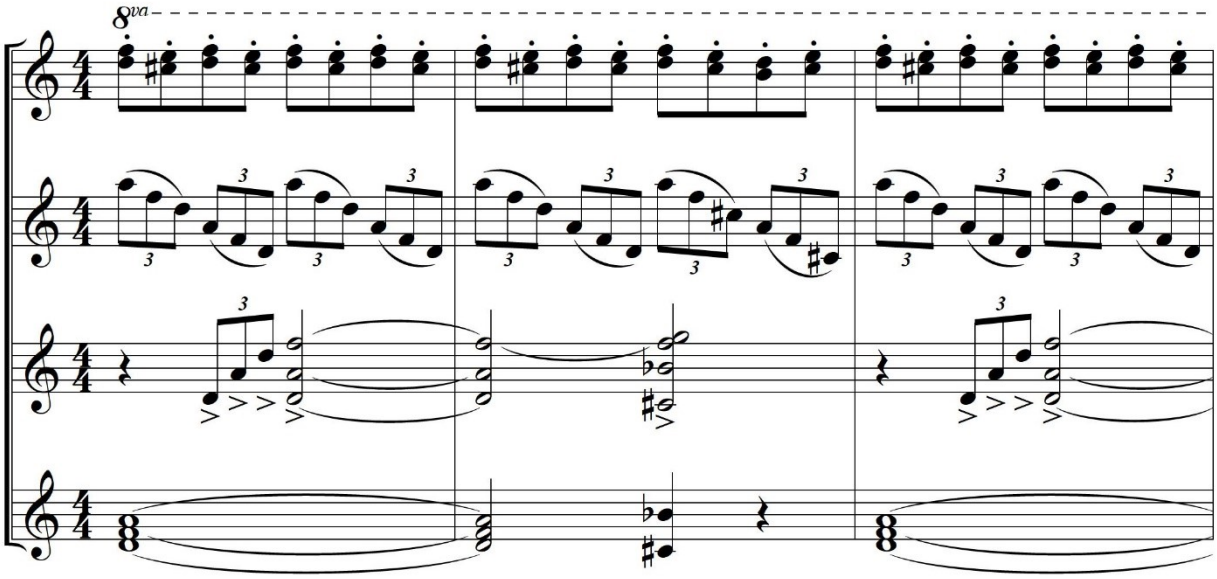
out in the open to their pursuers. Having only just eluded the first of the Joker's heinous traps at the art museum, the hero (in this, his non-civilian form) and his damsel have become their most vulnerable—an ironic twist of fate as the Batmobile becomes completely enshrouded in protective bulletproof shielding. Further complicating matters, the henchmen in pursuit have become free of their predicament and continue their chase, cornering Batman and Vicki. Sensing the futility of their predicament, Batman is forced to prepare for a fight—but only after finding a safe and secure location to protect his alter ego's love. Batman's need to protect Bruce's interests in the face of impending danger is reflected in the layering of duple divisions and subdivisions and an antimetrical triple division, growing in instrumentation and volume simultaneously before breaking dynamically in a sudden *subito piano* and cessation of all rhythmic conflict and intensity, settling on a sustained B-sonority.



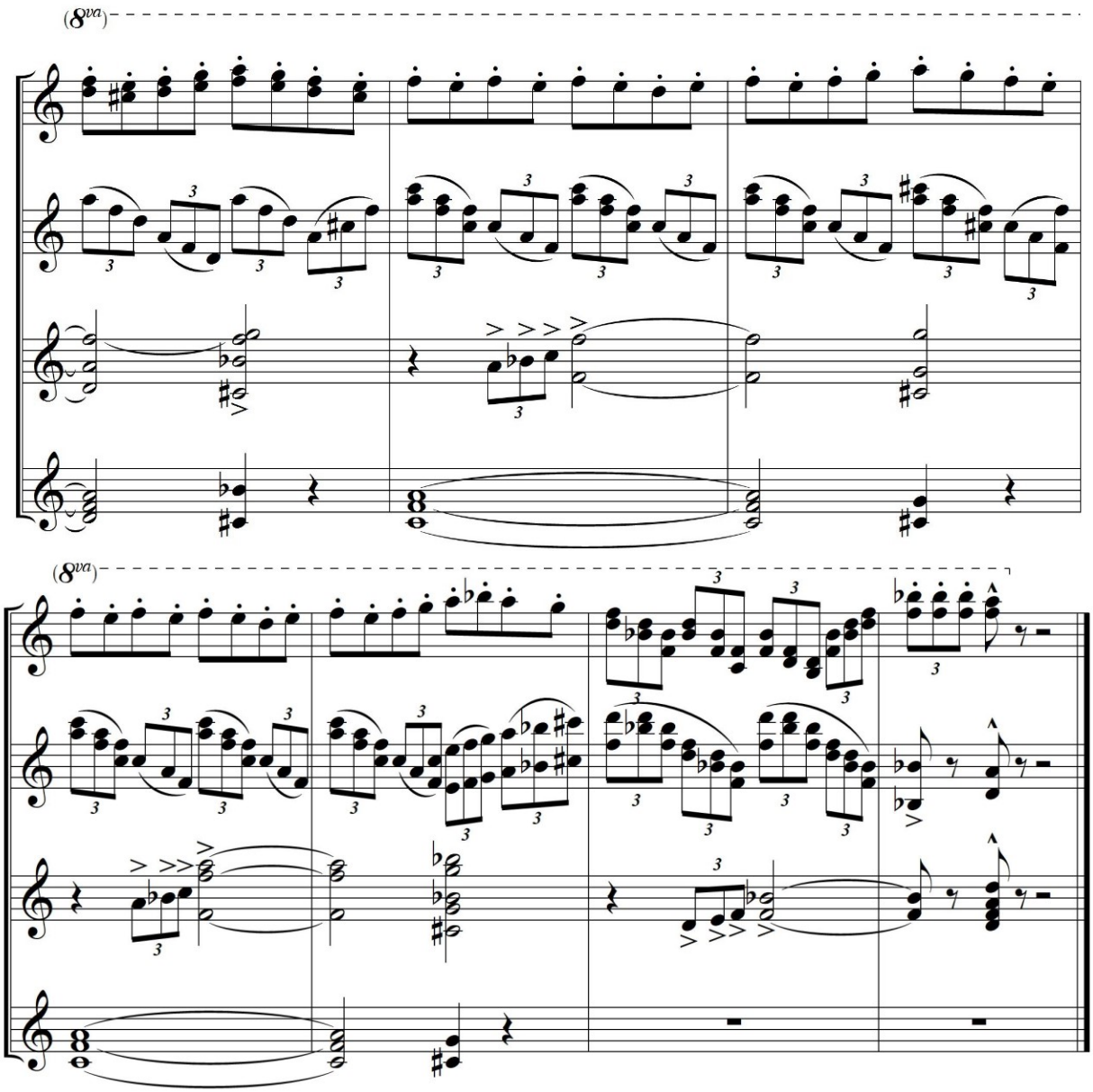
Music Example 4.10. Reduction of *Batman*, "Batmobile Chase," mm. 56-58.

Successfully avoiding the Joker's threat, Batman must find a safe and unknown location in which to take Vicki for protection; to make matters worse, however, she has taken several photographs of the recent encounter, providing the first genuine evidence of his existence that could be exposed and confirmed to the public. The only suitable option is the Batcave, Batman's secret lair underneath Wayne manor (see Example 4.11). Taking Vicki to this location, though, is the most dangerous

personal option for both identities of Bruce/Batman in that the unknown personality for each persona is shared by this secret space. Additionally, this is the primary physical space in the filmworld where the actions of Batman in the physical appearance/persona of Bruce intersect, uniting the two "identities" into a single entity. No outsider has encountered or is even aware of the existence of the Batcave or its proximity and relationship to Wayne Manor, and any risk of exposure is of the greatest threat to Bruce/Batman. With no options remaining, Batman illuminates the secret passageway as the choir hauntingly echoes the events unfolding, the hero preparing to reveal the greatest psychological threat to both identities by "unveiling the murky darkness" (*Tenebras obscuras cie!*) to his passenger. Fragments of the Bat-theme are accompanied by simple, predominantly neighboring divisions in the upper tessitura of the woodwinds, reflecting Bruce's (duple) space above the Batcave, while primarily descending compound divisions in the violins/violas reflect Batman's physical narrative space below, adding to the sense of disparity. Ultimately, metric resolution is achieved in the full orchestra triplets which concludes the cue, confirming the area and the scene as Batman-centric: protecting his passenger and his identity in securing the film.



Music Example 4.11. Reduction of *Batman*, "Descent into Mystery," mm. 42-51.



Music Example 4.11, continued.

Confirming his identity as a benevolent force to Commissioner Gordon, District Attorney Dent, and the citizens of Gotham as well as the identity of his alternate persona as Bruce Wayne to Vicki, Batman delivers a letter and signal to the city (refer to Example 1.10, "Finale"). Paralleling his validation as a fighter for justice and on equal footing with the law, as well as his acceptance by the police and prosecutorial staff who have recognized his methods, all statements of the Bat-theme utilize duple divisions of the primary tactus. Underlying this lawful presentation of the Bat-theme is a triple-

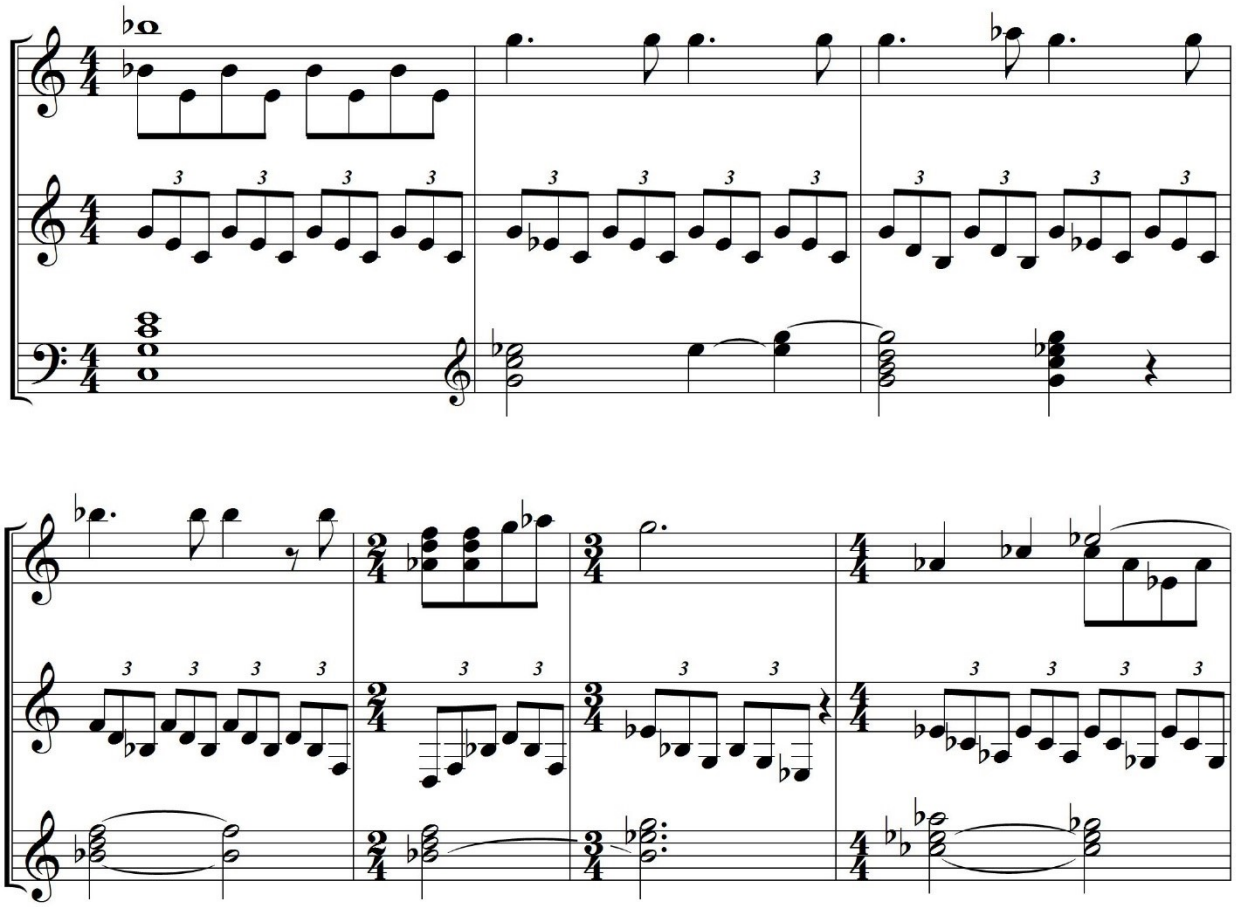
division ostinato in the bass, highly reminiscent of the opening titles. The conclusion of the film proper presents a two-fold resolution for the protagonist: for Batman, he will continue to operate outside of the law, but his methodology will be accepted and called upon when needed; for Bruce, his dual identity has been exposed and also accepted by Vicki, allowing him to continue living with both personas.

The use of metric grouping dissonance in main title sequences often foreshadows internal or external character or narrative conflict, particularly in the apparent absence of suggested discord. The duple/triple divide previously mentioned in *Corpse Bride* is initiated not only in the presentation of the principal theme, but also in the underlying accompaniment within the main titles. The opening interior shot reveals protagonist Victor dreamily illustrating butterflies in his sketchbook; a turn towards his window reveals his model: a blue butterfly trapped under glass sitting upon his desk. This first glimpse of a genuine butterfly is paired with a descending triplet accompaniment in the harp and glockenspiel, a figure which persists throughout the butterfly's centricity in the opening titles. Victor's release of the butterfly from its glass home and its free flight throughout the town is paired with an orchestral swell dynamics and emergence of the film title, providing the first intonation of connection between the butterfly and the corpse bride (see Example 4.12).[18]

This visual motif of a blue butterfly, seeking freedom, recurs twice throughout the film in pairings with the corpse bride and, more specifically, in triple subdivisions of the principal theme. The return of Emily and Victor to the land of the living features a single blue butterfly floating freely throughout the woods, reaching upwards to the moon before Emily begins dancing in the clearing. Unlike her first appearance in this location, where she claims Victor as her husband and immediately takes him below to the Underworld, this is the first opportunity for Emily to explore the living world, and she begins twirling joyously underneath the glow of the moon. Much like the spatial freedom articulated in the clearing, the emotional and psychological freedom achieved at the close of the film is paired with the visual iconography of blue butterflies. With the demise of her murderer and her soul

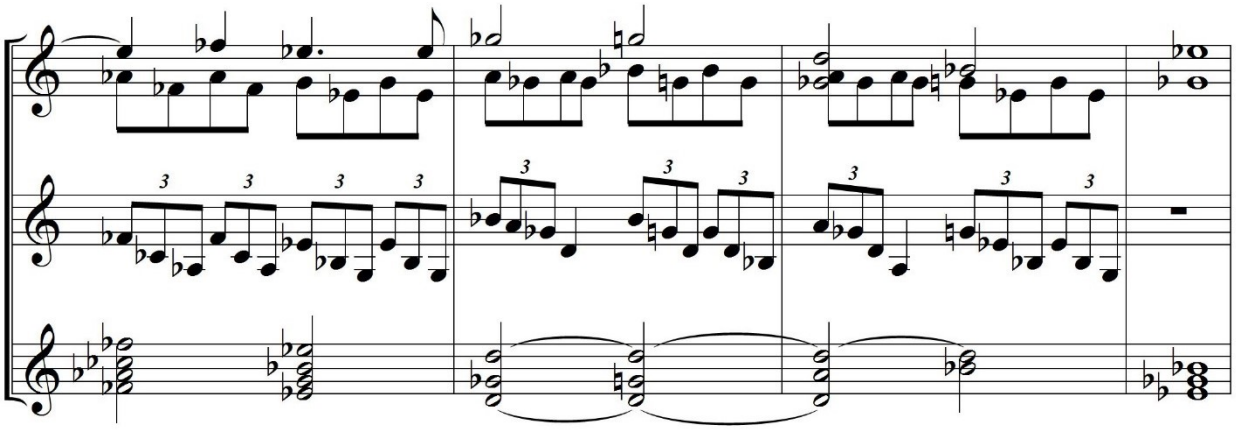
[18] Of significant note is the synchronization of the triplet figure with the appearance of the butterfly in the conductor score as a temporal boundary, ensuring that the image and figure occur simultaneously.

at peace, Emily frees Victor of his vow and allows him to remain amongst the living. No longer seeking vengeance or companionship, Emily's spirit has achieved the ultimate freedom, and her quest is complete despite the end of her matrimonial bond. This psychological change is paired with a physical metamorphosis as her withered physical body transmutes into hundreds of blue butterflies, ascending into the heavens and towards the full moon. Though only Victor and Victoria remain in the church in the land of the living, the scene and finale clearly belong to Emily both visually and musically, as the blue butterflies and triple subdivisions of the main theme persist until the final fade to black.



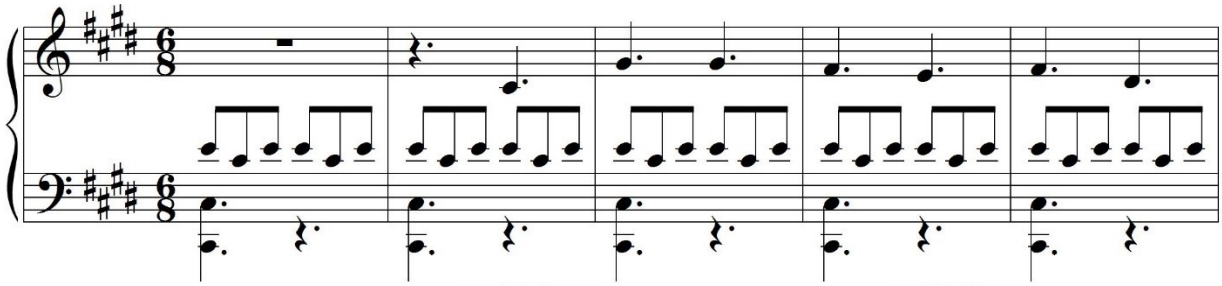
Music Example 4.12. Reduction of *Corpse Bride*, "Main Titles," mm. 20-30.[19]

[19] Because much of the score is derived from a printout from a synthesizer, enharmonic pitches have been provided in this reduction to reflect the implied key of A♭minor beginning in m. 24, following the two meter changes, rather than the nondiatonic pitches contained in the original score.

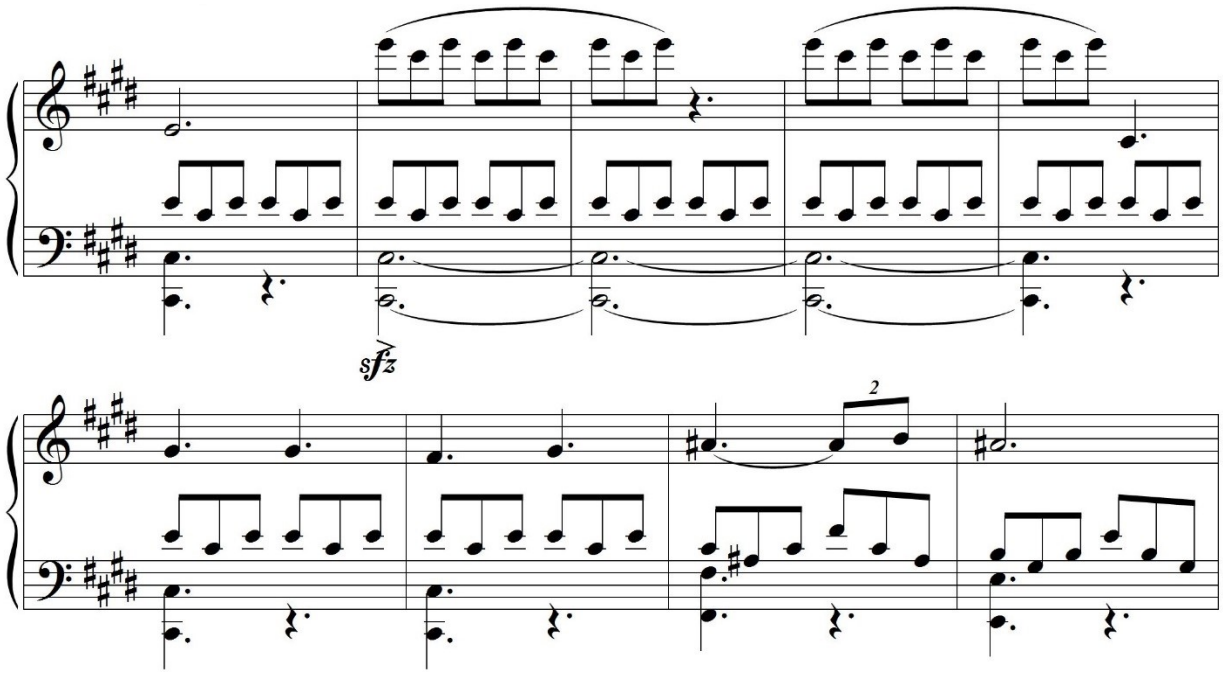


Music Example 4.12, continued.

While *Batman* and *Corpse Bride* introduce compound divisions as a means of foreshadowing narrative dissonance during main title sequence, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* invert this process and utilize duple antimetrical divisions against a stable triple feel to create the sense of tension between the titular characters and the unfolding filmworld. The opening to *Alice in Wonderland* begins with an exterior long shot of a dark, misty night as the studio and film titles appear in gold lettering against the sky, the Present Alice theme musically accompanying the tracking shot (see Example 4.13a). The lone duple division in the theme is paired with a critical landmark: Big Ben; this brief but invaluable juncture establishes the opening scene in the "real" world of London, placing the following filmic action not in Underland, but in England.

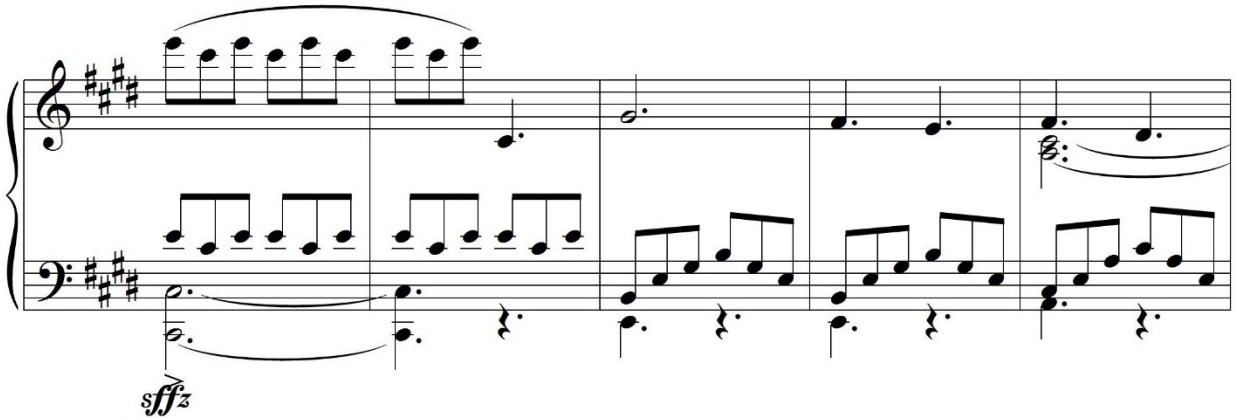


Music Example 4.13a. Transcription of *Alice in Wonderland*, "Main Titles" [0:00:35 — 0:00:49].

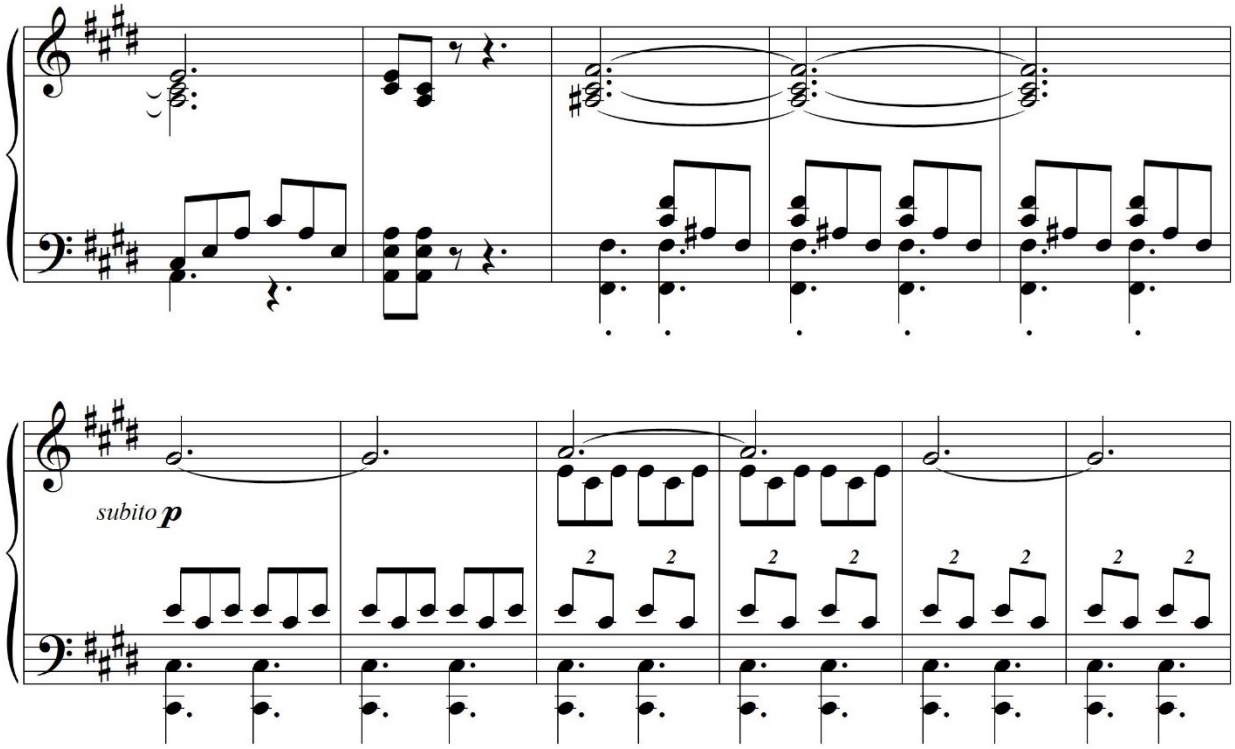


Music Example 4.13a, continued.

The camera ultimately settles upon the Kingsleigh home, where the patriarch is preparing for a business meeting. His young daughter interrupts the session, greatly disturbed by her recurring strange dream of a fantastic world with bizarre people and creatures. This transition, marked by the simultaneous end of the Present Alice theme, coincides with a significant shift in the underlying ostinato pattern from compound to simple (see Example 4.13b). This modification, however, is not instantaneous but gradual, as the two patterns briefly overlap before the simple divisions establish prominence.

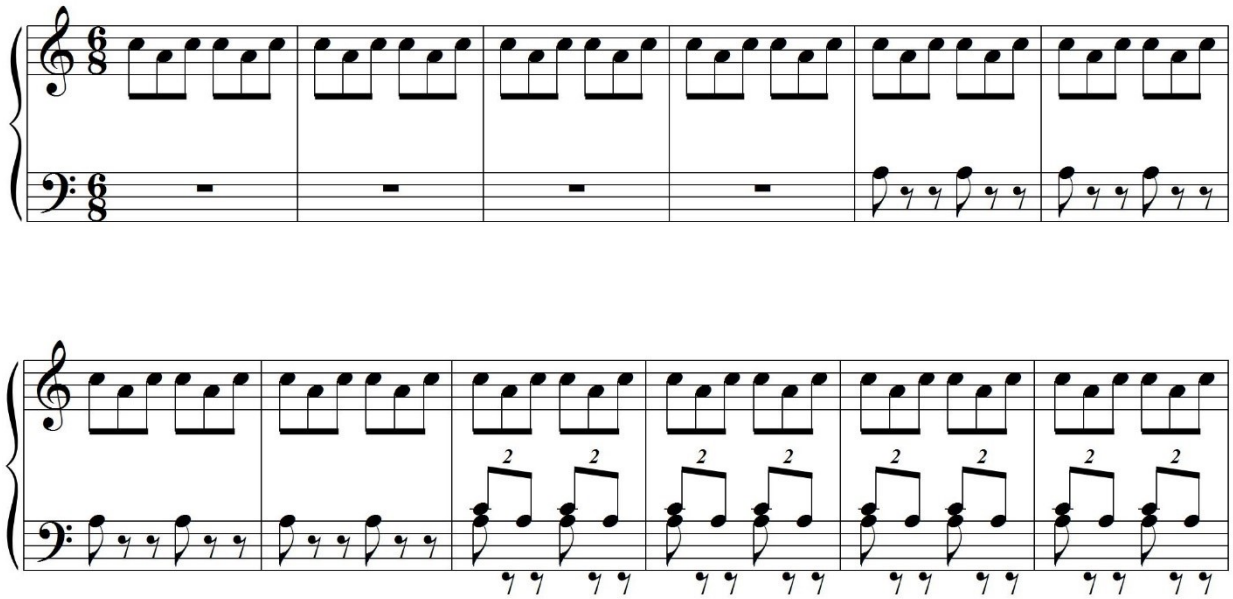


Music Example 4.13b. Transcription of *Alice in Wonderland*, "Main Titles" [0:00:50 – 0:01:10].



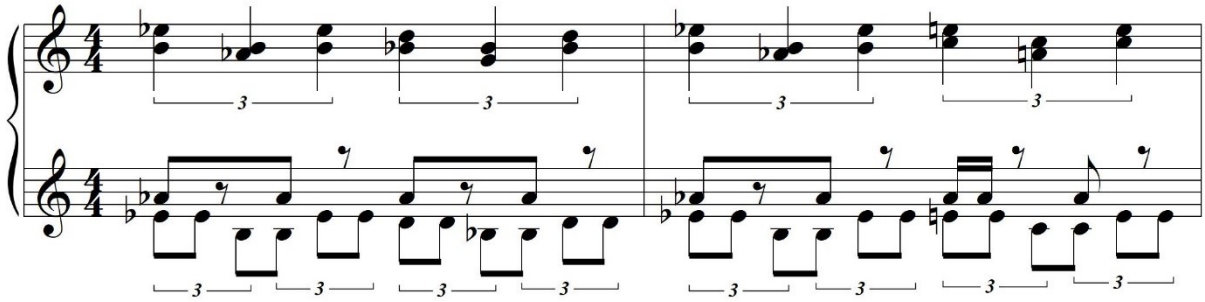
Music Example 4.13b, continued.

This transition from triple to duple divisions parallels young Alice's unseen awakening and subsequent transition from her dream-world state of "Wonderland," the name her adolescent self has for Underland, to her home. Not only do the duple divisions in this main title sequence visually identify with the landmark elements establishing England and thus reality, but also they pair with essential thematic qualities of the protagonist. Of the three themes associated with Alice, the "Little Alice" and "Future Alice" (Proposal) themes are both firmly situated within duple metric/submetric space, while the primary Alice theme associated with the contemporary filmworld character—and one most directly linked to the fantastic world of Underland—utilizes triple divisions. This direct conflict is more diametrically articulated in the end credits, which utilizes the overtly named "Alice's Theme" first track from the commercial soundtrack, transcribed in Example 4.14. A prolonged accompaniment overlaps duple and triple divisions at the outset of this theme, uniting past and present and confirming Alice's experience of the fantastic from her childhood.



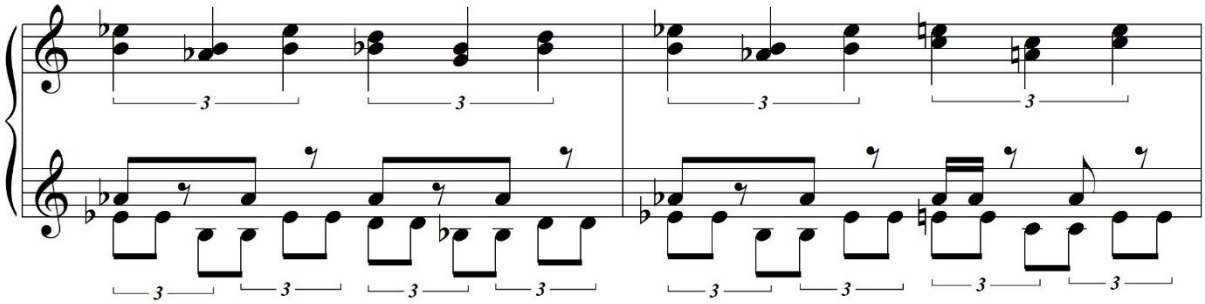
Music Example 4.14. Transcription of *Alice in Wonderland*, "Alice's Theme" (soundtrack) [0:00 – 0:12].[20]

The main titles of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, a return to the prolonged opening title sequences of Burton's early films, features significant dissonance on both the metric and submetric levels to express the vast separation between Willy Wonka and his associated space (his chocolate factory) from the rest of the narrative world (see Example 4.15). As the film title appears amidst a swirling vat of chocolate, the resulting dissonance on the metric level introduces a 3:2 hemiola; submetrically, brief moments of 1/4 divisions are interspersed, creating conflicts of 1/3 : 1/4.



Music Example 4.15. Reduction of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, "Main Titles," mm. 31-34.[21]

[20] The commercial track of "Alice's Theme" is the same musical cue used for the end credits of the film.



Music Example 4.15, continued.

This dual level of metric dissonance establishes the considerable narrative distance from which Willy Wonka resides in the filmworld. His chocolate factory, not only a fantastic spectacle of the imagination, has been completely sealed off from the outside world and remains a great mystery to all. Additionally, its eccentric owner-operator, since his self-imposed exile, has become an even grander mystery than his facility. The unfolding film reveals that he is socially disconnected from adults his age as he maintains a child-like psychological mindset and considerable dislike for grownups; he is simultaneously disconnected emotionally from the children in part from his business ventures but, much more importantly, their relationship with their family and loved ones.

Similar to the combination of multiple, individually expressed metrical layers as a means of articulating narratological dissonance, the combination of metric, harmonic, and/or thematic transformative processes can reveal various components of the narrative. Additionally, transformations of the recurring patterns may reflect changes in physical or psychological states within the narrative, with alterations of one musical element with the simultaneous preservation of another (such as the modification of melodic/temporal qualities through the preservation of harmonic patterns) can provide a more enriched reading of a given score. Uniting these strands of melodic,

[21] The provided reduction has been slightly modified from the original score by rebeaming the bottom voice to reflect the rhythmic congruence with the top voice and make clear the rhythmic symmetry between the outer voice pair. The use of C♭ in the bass clef staff and B in the treble clef staff, rather than enharmonic respellings, is a preservation from the original score, which utilizes the two different spellings simultaneously, likely due to the use of synthesizers within the orchestration.

harmonic, and rhythmic/metric transformations can produce a "Composite Theory" that explores the parallels between the entwined, evolving states of music and narrative.

CHAPTER 5:

A CASE STUDY FOR A "COMPOSITE THEORY" OF TRANSFORMATIONAL NARRATIVITY IN ELFMAN'S FILM SCORING TECHNIQUE

In selecting an individual film for a case study, one movie in particular comes to the fore in its ability to encapsulate the idea of wide-ranging Burtonian filmworld and Elfman's role in articulating elements of the narrative. Released in 1993, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* serves as a passion project for Tim Burton, originating as a poem and a few character animations around 1982-84, shortly after completing his short stop-motion film *Vincent*. At the time, Burton was still an animator with the Walt Disney Company, who owned the rights to all original creations during his tenure.[1] The project remained nothing more than these initial sketches for several years after Burton left the studio and built his reputation as a director. Seeking to expand Disney's holdings and ventures beyond the traditional animated films which had come to oversaturate the 1980s, as well as capitalize on the recent successes of the director especially following the films *Batman*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Edward Scissorhands*, Walt Disney Pictures and Touchstone Pictures president David Hoberman sought to bring Tim Burton back into the Disney stable, granting Burton the autonomy and medium long sought to bring his vision to life: a full-length, stop-motion musical.[2] Despite receiving permission, Burton willingly handed directorial reins of the project to close friend and noted stop-motion animator and director Henry Selick, with Burton assuming the role of producer and providing occasional feedback during breaks while filming *Batman Returns*.

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[1] See Mark Salisbury, *Burton on Burton* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 115-16 for Burton's own description of the origins of the poem.

[2] See Mimi Avins, "Ghoul World, 1993," in *Tim Burton Interviews*, ed. Kristian Fraga (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi, 2005), 98.

Aside from Burton's willing avoidance of the directorial role, the most notable change in terms of working process for the film involves the storyboard and music composition process. The original script developed from Burton's three-page poem, written by collaborator Michael McDowell, did not meet the intended vision and was dismissed fairly early in development.[3] To cultivate a "new" methodology to meet the vision of director, composer, and ultimate overseer, Burton inverted the traditional filmic/directorial process and began with the construction of the film's musical content before any script preparation or storyboard construction, providing Elfman with a private reading of the original poem and developing approximately eighty percent of the songs before any filming commenced. Burton describes this atypical process, as well as Elfman's close involvement in the final product:

> What Danny and I had when we started was the poem that I wrote and some drawings and some storyboards, and also this story outline I did . . . I would go over to his house and we would just treat it like an operetta, not like the musicals that they did, but more like that old-fashioned kind of thing, where the songs were more engrained in the story. I would begin to tell him the story and he'd write a song; he wrote them pretty quickly, actually, at least the initial pass on them. We worked in a weird way, where there was the outline and the songs and then we worked out the script.[4]

In so doing, Elfman was able to capture directly the essence of the Burtonian narrative in the aural component of the filmworld through the written source and the creator's perceived "filmind" despite Burton's intentional removal from the filmworld's projection. The sense of the film's autonomy becomes significantly more impactful, selecting its visual representations to the filmgoer through *an interpreter's* view (in this case, Henry Selick) while preserving its unique (specifically-Burtonian) aural components and building the presentation to the filmgoer around the songs.

The Nightmare Before Christmas becomes unusually situated within Burton's filmic output, Elfman's compositional process, and the traditional approach to film and the sound track itself. Music is no longer in a subsidiary role but instead becomes elevated to the primary position, with the visual

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[3] See Salisbury, *Burton on Burton*, 121.

[4] Ibid. 121.

presentation of the filmworld and the script (rewritten by Caroline Thompson) responding to Elfman's songs. Additionally, the underscore also becomes supplementary, drawing its material from the original Burton/Elfman collaboration and becoming a response to a primary musical narrative, rather than the visual medium. The filmworld-as-presented, interpreted through a separate director, is a contemporary setting of a nineteenth-century operetta, and the Burtonian narrative is encapsulated through the ten original songs written by Elfman, rather than the traditional visual/oral/aural presentation.

A transformational reading of the songs of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*

In addition to its situation within Burton's output, Elfman's compositional process, and the traditional film music scoring procedure in general, the songs within *The Nightmare Before Christmas* afford a significantly larger network of interconnectivity within themselves and with the narrative.[5] This notion of interrelationship, particularly between harmonic and metric elements, extends well beyond many of the surface-level gestures and into the union of parsimonious voice leading with perceived metric grouping layers of duple and triple structures, pairing total voice leading work with distinct metric states. These patterns help establish the two separate realms characteristic of the original Burtonian narrative: the "reality" of Halloween Town and the "fantasy" of Christmas Town. Also exceptional to *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is the projection of a long-term tonal design and its intimate relationship not only to the diegesis but also to the transformational processes which undergird the respective realms.

This potential for long-term tonal narrative design, while inherently problematic, is not entirely novel.[6] The dual advantages of the songs' entwinement with the narrative and the close proximity of

[5] Portions of this analysis appear in Andrew S. Powell, "The Interconnectivity of Elfman's Film Scoring and Burton's Narrative," in *A Critical Companion to Tim Burton*, Ed. by Adam Barkman and Antonio Sanna (New York: Lexington, 2017): 57-70. The prose of the analysis within the book chapter is tailored towards a "film" audience as opposed to a music-analytic discourse, though the heart of the work remains transformation-centric. All examples, figures, and transformation labels contained within this dissertation are original to this work.

the film's development to nineteenth-century operetta facilitates the formulation and preservation of overarching tonal relationships. In formulating his network for the relationship of tonal narrative design, David Neumeyer suggests that "narrative and pitch design interact in an associational network that may use tonal patterns that are functional, symbolic, or both."[7] The separation of the two worlds in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and their respective voice leading spaces—on both the chordal and long-term levels—hinges upon this long-term narrative tonal design and their transformational (**P**) separation, revealing the proximity and dichotomy of their respective realms.[8]

Just as the process for the filmic creation of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* was inverted, however, so too will the analytical method be altered to preserve the construction of both narrative and music with respect to the original filmworld. The songs do not simply form the structural skeleton of the diegesis, but also all the music as well, serving as the source from which the instrumental underscore draws and develops any and all thematic material.[9] In so doing, a discussion of the instrumental underscore will be avoided as an independent element; references to its incorporation of central associative themes may be used, but this process will be retrospective.

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[6] See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: IUP, 1987), 90. In discussing Leonid Sabaneyev's philosophies and practices of film music composition primarily of the 1930s, Gorbman summarizes, "Tonal relationships in the score are also managed so as to contribute a sense of the film's unity. Sabaneev gives a typical rule of thumb: if music has been absent for more than fifteen seconds, the composer is free to start a new music cue in a different and even unrelated key, since the spectator/auditor will have sufficiently forgotten the previous cue's tonality. But if the gap has lasted less than the requisite time, the new cue must start in the same key (or a closely related one."

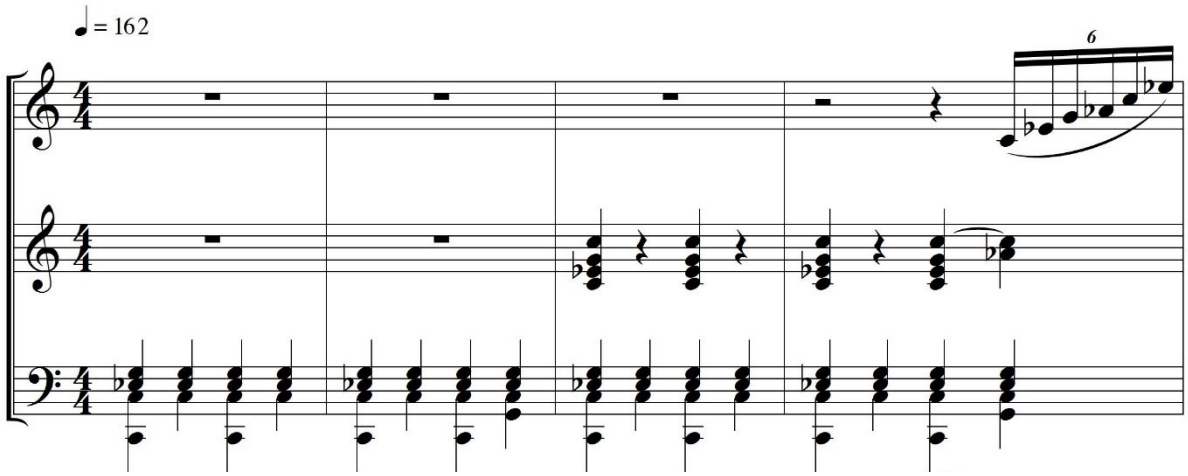
[7] David Neumeyer, Tonal Design and Narrative in Film Music: Bernard Herrmann's *A Portrait of Hitch* and *The Trouble With Harry*," *Indiana Theory Review*, 19, 1-2 (1998), 110.

[8] A recent dissertation has challenged the tendency to overgeneralize the lack of long-term tonality in film and proposes a new approach to such analysis, exploring eleven films between 1984-2014 to explore filmic tonality. Focusing especially on the works of directors Anthony Minghella and Wes Anderson, Táhirih Motazedian explores the concept of filmic tonal design, as well as tonal thematic linkage and pitched sound effects and their correspondence to the overall key structure. See Táhirih Motazedian, "To Key or Not to Key: Tonal Design in Film Music," Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University (2017).

[9] See Alison McMahan, *The Films of Tim Burton: Animating Live Action in Contemporary Hollywood* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 210. She summarizes, "Because Elfman had already composed thirty minutes of songs for the seventy-minute movie, half of his job was already done, and he had three years to work on it, as compared to the usual six to eight weeks. Moreover, the main music themes already existed in song form, so he could adapt those theme to the dramatic needs of the underscore."

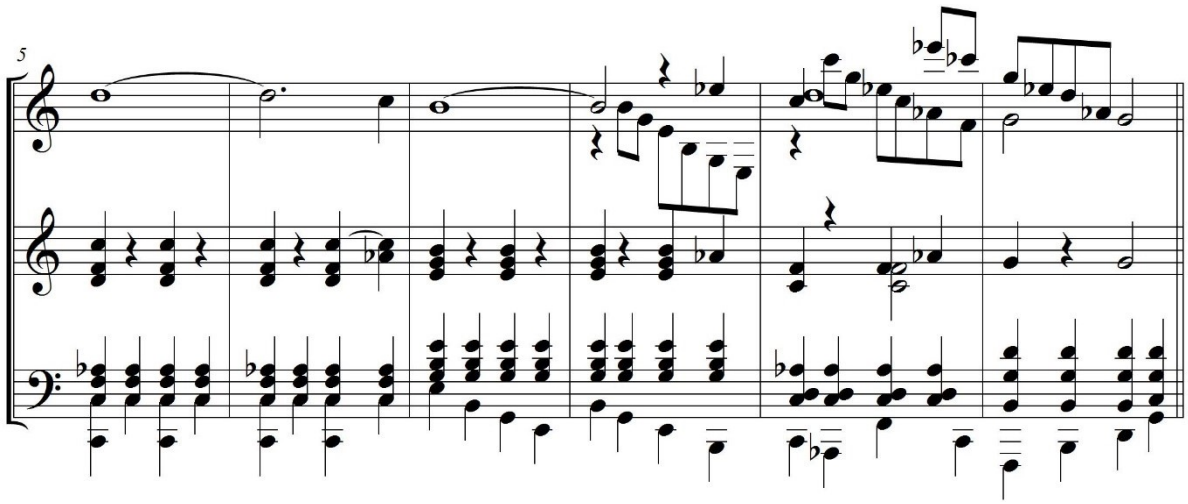
This is Halloween

Through the opening of the pumpkin-shaped door on a tree in the sparse Hinterlands, the filmgoer is introduced to Halloween Town, one of the many holiday worlds and the home to protagonist Jack Skellington. The low marcato strings establish a strong duple meter in all levels of the metric hierarchy and firm tonal center of C minor as a lone scarecrow is introduced within the filmworld against the background, pivoting with the wind and the change of harmony (Dø^{7} → E-). A secondary set of unseen doors open simultaneously with the introductory cadence, leading the filmgoer from this unknown underground crypt and into the graveyard where the holiday celebration is unfolding (see Example 5.1.). This first verse immediately breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the filmgoer, serving not only to depict the transpiring merriment within the holiday world but also to establish the archetypal components of Halloween Town musical space, particularly with respect to both harmony and meter. In welcoming the observer, the townspeople also establish the filmworld reality with respect to the setting in the overall Burtonian narrative division of the real and fantastic.



Music Example 5.1. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "This is Halloween," mm. 1-10.[10]

[10] The commercial songbook diminishes the original rhythmic values for this song. The reductions used for this song are based on the original handwritten score with orchestration by Steve Bartek.



Music Example 5.1, continued.

While the instrumental introduction provides a clear metric framework for the real musico-narrative landscape, the first chorus provides a considerable amount of characteristic triadic transformations which are used in Halloween Town music space. An exceptional amount of harmonic material focuses on minor or diminished sonorities throughout the first song, with major triads reserved for functional dominant chords or brief, neighboring **L** transformations with one exception.[11] The majority of triadic motion between minor chords emphasizes single common tone retention with minimal voice leading work between adjacent chords. Such voice leading qualities create six potential progressions, summarized in Figure 5.1: four in which voice leading is always similar, and two in which voice leading is contrary. Additionally, the similar voice leading always involves disparate distances (one voice by semitone, one voice by two semitones), while contrary motion utilizes an identical (one semitone) distance between moving voices (see Example 5.2).

[11] This isolated deviation occurs in mm. 16-17, within the progression of C- → B♭+ → G- and preparing a transient modulation to G minor within the first statement of the chorus. While primarily using the relative major in this moment to facilitate the quick modulation, the atypical use of the major chord at this point also emphasizes the root movement by descending minor third that is fairly common throughout the song. A similar argument can be made in mm. 88-91, where an identical gesture occurs transposed up a semitone and integrating a long-term harmonic tendency of Halloween Town harmonic space.

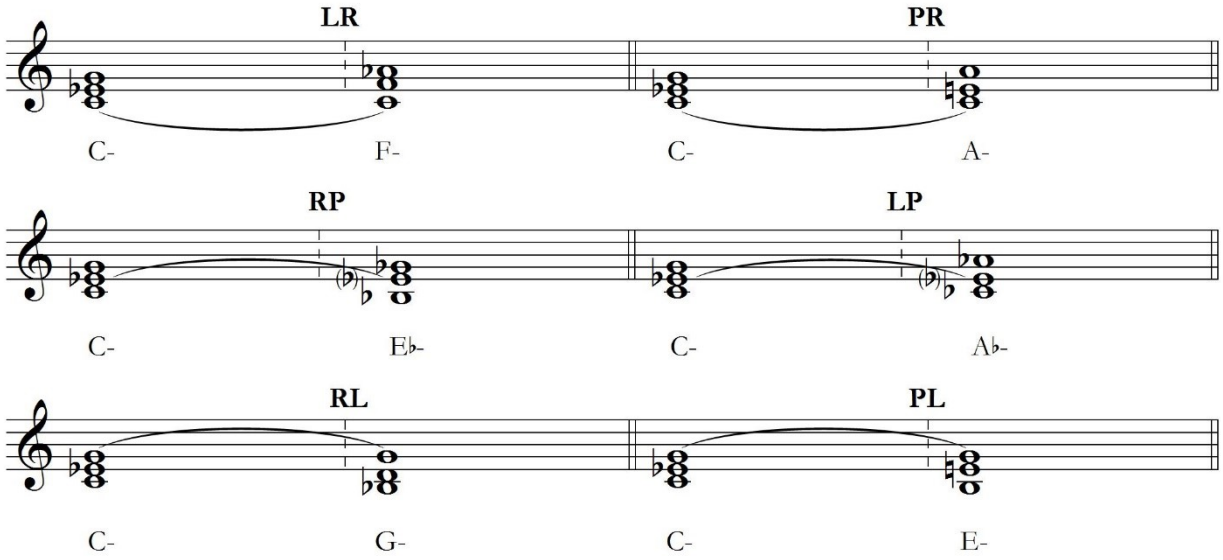
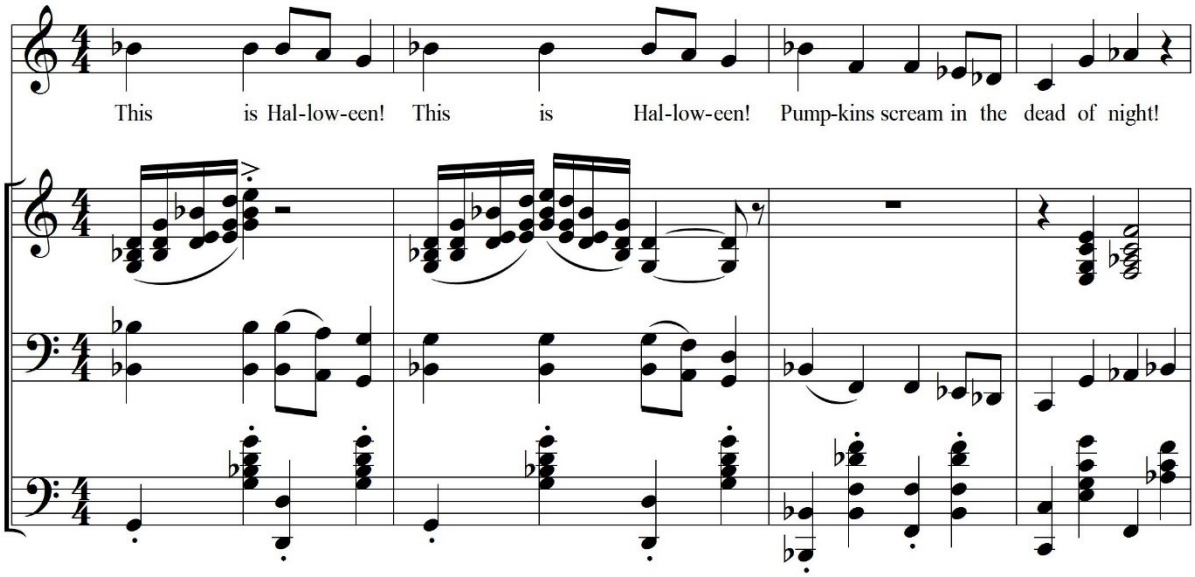
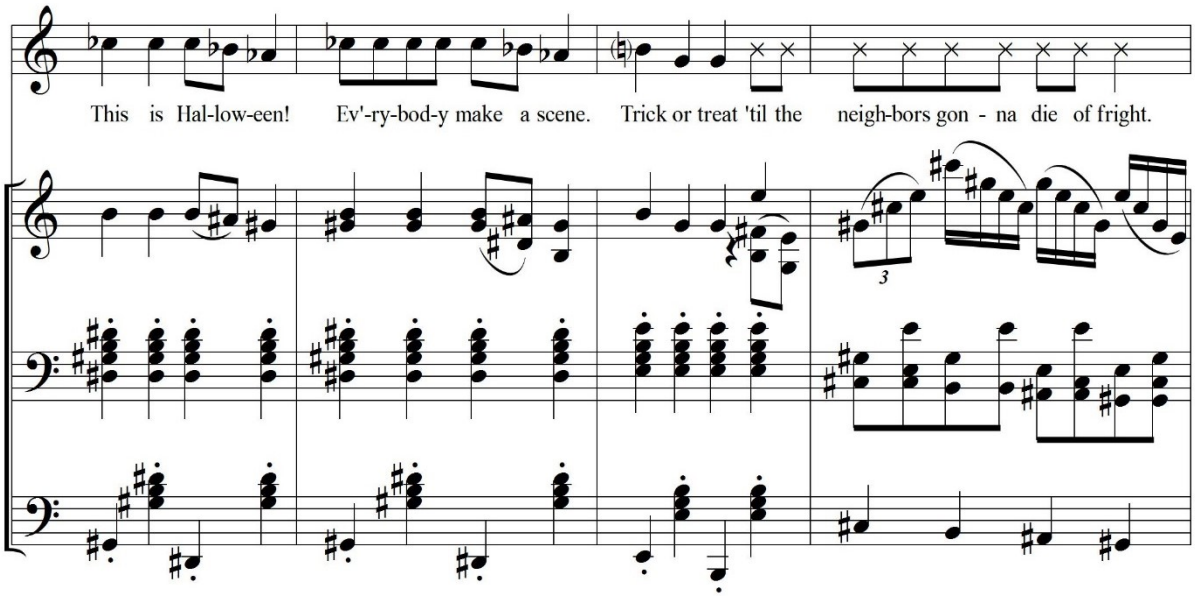


Figure 5.1. Collection of common tone *Schritte* transformations from C minor.



Music Example 5.2. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "This is Halloween," mm. 19-26.



Music Example 5.2, continued.

Of the six potential transformations are created through these qualities, only four form the locus of Halloween Town "harmonic space," as both **LR** and **RL**, which utilize distances of a perfect fifth (ascending or descending), are atypical motions largely due to their diatonic-sounding nature. The remaining four progressions, which incorporate root motion by thirds (major or minor) and result in nondiatonic progressions, appear with regular consistency and are all incorporated within the ten measures of the first chorus; each of these four progressions appear in mm. 19-29 of "This is Halloween, as identified in the reduction of Figure 5.2.

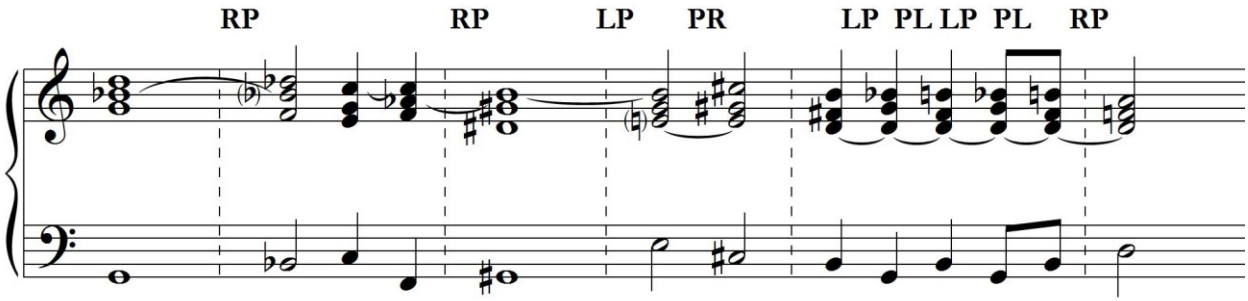


Figure 5.2. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "This is Halloween," mm. 19-29.[12]

[12] In this reduction, durational values have been doubled from the real equivalent.

Not only do these transformations govern a significant amount of chordal progressions but also larger tonal patterns, either temporary tonicizations or key centers within songs. The parsimonious voice leading, which uses common tone retention and two voices in motion, suggest a "duple" nature for the harmonic tendencies of Halloween Town. This maximally close "duple" voice leading space of the four characteristic progressions is expressed in two separate ways: in two progressions (**LP**, **PL**), the two moving voices each move by a single semitone in opposite directions; in two progressions (**RP**, **PR**), the two moving voices each move in the same direction (**RP** descending, **PR** ascending), but each voice moves by a different amount, with one voice moving by semitone and one by whole tone. The only other modulatory gesture which appears with relative frequency in "Halloween harmonic space" is by semitone, either ascending or descending. Such a modulation is never prepared and almost always carries the narrative connotation of building excitement or intensity. This overall duple structure governs the primary organizational features of the song, with the only metric deviations incorporated to accommodate the text.

Whereas the chorus introduces the primary transformations which constitute "real harmonic space" within the musical narrative of the filmworld for both immediate progressions and modulations, other gestures such as prolonged arpeggiations of characteristic sonorities further accentuate the idiomatic soundscape of Halloween Town. The introduction of several residents, including the Harlequin Demon, Melting Man, Werewolf, Witches, and the Hanging Tree with its collection of skeletal remnants, are all presented through over an arpeggiated B- sonority (see Example 5.3). The resultant transformations strongly emphasize both **LP** and **PR** motions, especially at the end of the passage; the use of **RL**, though somewhat abnormal throughout the song, becomes a necessity to accommodate the cycling of the triadic content (see Figure 5.3).

Scream! This is Hal-low-een, red and black and slim-y green. Aren't you scared? Well, that's just fine!

59

Say it once, say it twice, take a chance and roll the dice. Ride with the moon in the dead of night.

59

63

Ev-'ry-bod-y scream, ev-'ry-bod-y scream In our town of Hal-low

63

Music Example 5.3. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "This is Halloween," mm. 55-65.[13]

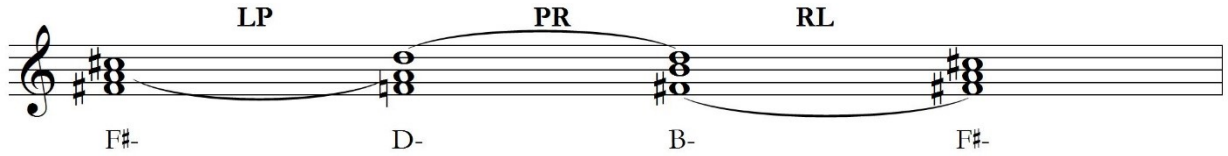
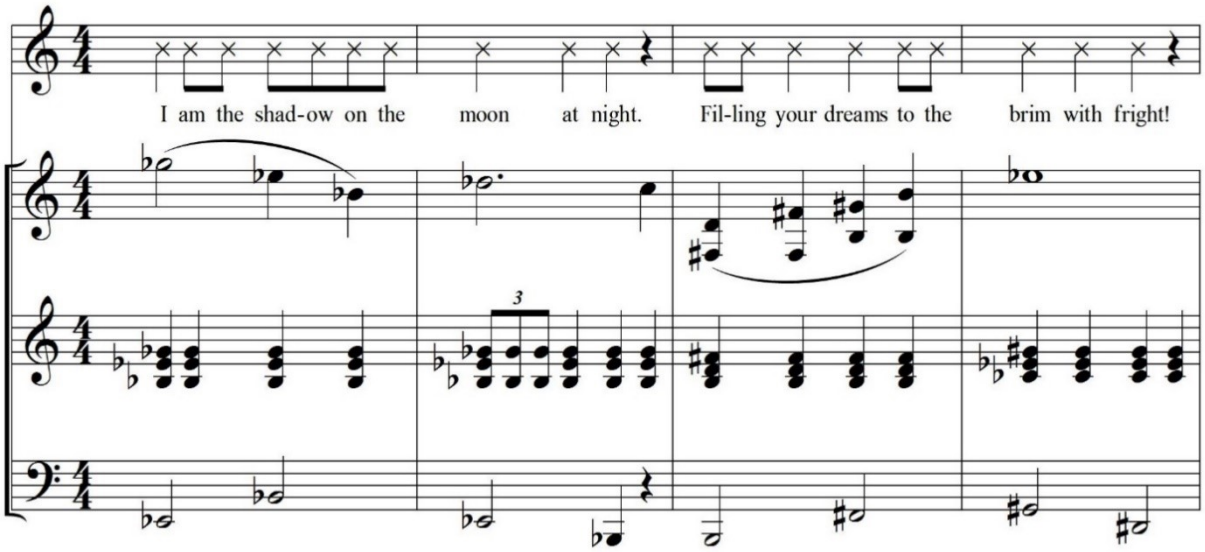


Figure 5.3. Chord cycle and triadic prolongation in "This is Halloween," mm. 55-64.

A similar arpeggiation, following the introduction to the (at the time, unknown) antagonist, leads to a modulation into C♯ minor, projecting a long-term building of excitement as the children celebrate their special day. This conflicted instant of Oogie Boogie's first appearance, shown in Example 5.4, in conjunction with the building tenor of joy is set to downward arpeggiation of a fully-diminished seventh chord, situated between successive major third intervals (see Figure 5.4).



Music Example 5.4. Reduction of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "This is Halloween," mm. 74-83.[14]

[13] In the original score, m. 65 is written in $\frac{6}{4}$. The slurring and beaming within the orchestration, however, does not reflect a compound duple meter, but a simple triple. The meter has been rewritten in this reduction to reflect this articulation and the melodic contour, which further implies three beats.

[14] The presence of G♯ and D♯ within the otherwise identified A♭- triad is a preservation of Bartek's original orchestration, as well as the tendencies of Elfman's scoring technique to utilize enharmonic pitches freely. The pitches provided have been selected to reflect the original score, while the subsequent analysis assumes enharmonic equivalency.

78

This is Hal - low - een, This is Hal - low - een! Hal - low - een! Hal - low - een!

78

81

Hal - low - een! Hal - low - een! Hal - low - een! Hal - low - een!

81

8va

Music Example 5.4, continued.

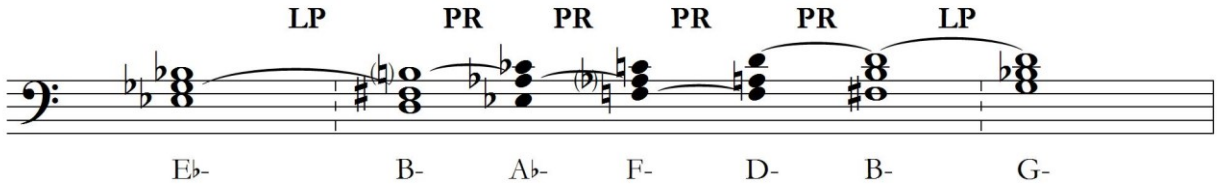


Figure 5.4. Reduction of harmonic pattern in "This is Halloween," mm. 74-83.

As the festivities draw to a close, the final tonal centers serve to confirm C minor and its constituent elements of the Halloween Town harmonic landscape. Announcing the appearance of their leader, paired with the physical return of the scarecrow from the entrance through the town's magic door, the tonic progresses to E♭ minor through a series of rapid tonicizations, ultimately moving to the mediant of the initial home key. As the scarecrow comes to life and reveals that Jack has been present and inside the figure all along, the townspeople make their final decrees to the filmgoer, proclaiming their king and seeking the appropriate adulation for their ruler. This call to attention is met with an additional modulation to G minor (**PL**), completing the long-term arpeggiation of the tonic triad as the song comes to a close in the dominant key. Jack's first appearance—and the filmgoer's introduction into the newly developed filmic reality, his subsequent return in costume, and his grand reveal in final (true) form substantiate the significance of C minor and its constituents on a localized and macro level as the narrative unfolds.

Jack's Lament

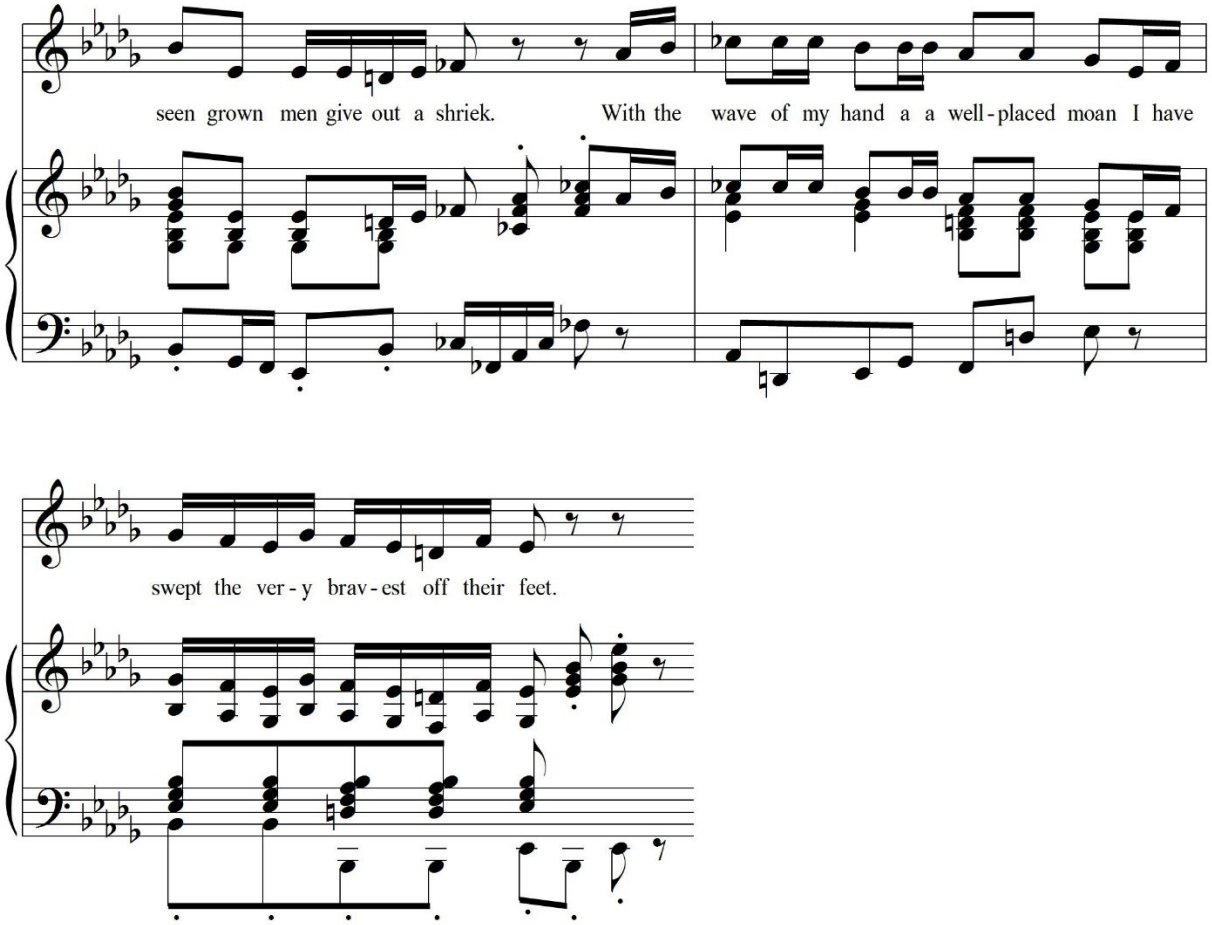
As Jack begins to sing, the orientation of horizontal melodic lines becomes significantly rearranged as the descending "dreamer" melody becomes the principal bass figure and the oscillating woodwind accompaniment becomes the new primary melody for Jack's soliloquy, reiterating his static pensiveness (see Example 5.5). Adding to the mental frustration and instability of the moment is the tonal volatility, for the center remains precariously balanced between both B♭ minor and E♭ minor and establishing the inescapability of Halloween Town within Jack's world. Finally settling in the key of E♭ minor, Jack seems resigned to his fate as the Pumpkin King of Halloween Town—which lacks a sense of fulfillment due to its tedium.

There are few who de - ny at what I do I am the best, for my

tal-ents are re-nowned far and wide. When it comes to sur-pris-es on a moon-lit night, I ex-

cel with-out ev-er e-ven try - ing. With the slight-est lit-tle ef-fort of my ghost-like charms I have

Music Example 5.5. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Lament" [0:06:49 – 0:07:24].

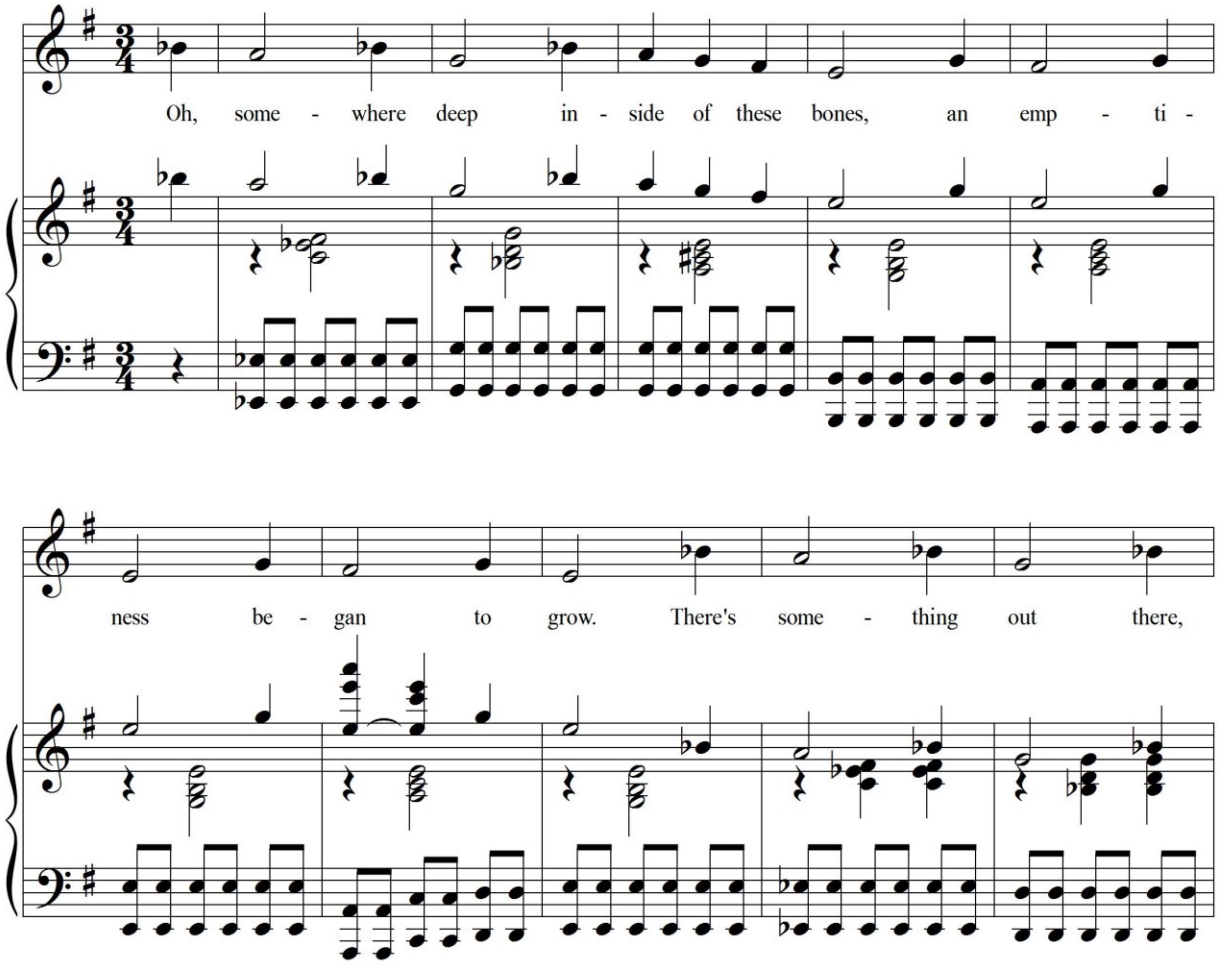


Music Example 5.5, continued.

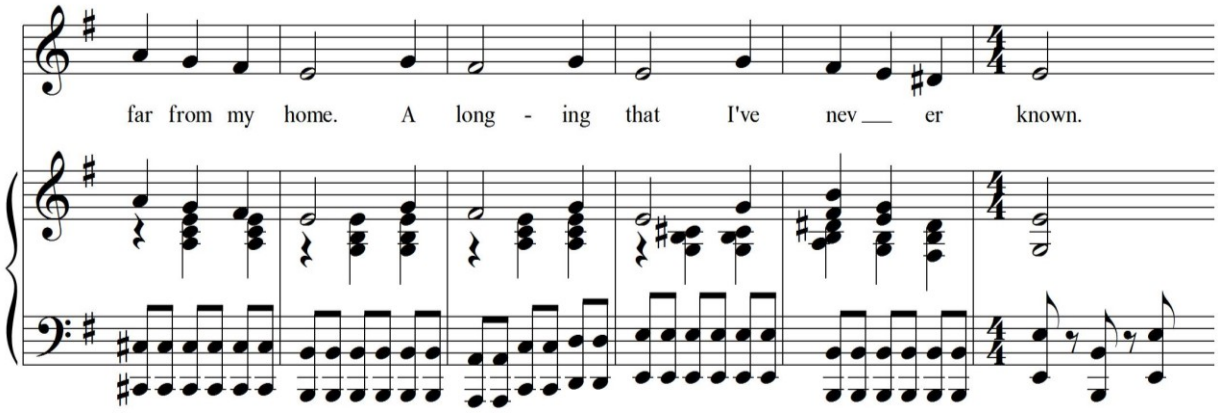
As Jack dives further into his depression, a dramatic shift occurs in both tonal and metric organization that stabs at his aimlessness and attempts to find a solution, concurrently suggesting an unseen and unknown solution through the music. The mournful downward trajectory of the melodic line is set to a triple meter, the first such sustained triple meter within Halloween Town (reality) song space (see Example 5.6). Additionally, an ascending semitonal modulation occurs, prepared by a half cadence in the preceding key and rising in tonal center to E minor, introducing the pitch as a sustained tonic for the first time within reality as well.[15] Strengthening the discord of the moment is the atypical

[15] There is an eight-measure section in "This is Halloween" in which E minor is the tonal center, but its presence is greatly weakened by several factors. The only harmonic motion incorporated in this section is a **PL** transformation from E- → C♯-, negating any functional progressions that would confirm key through cadential harmonies. Moreover, the melody overwhelmingly emphasizes a B^7 chord throughout the entire section, which fails to stabilize E as a tonal center through both harmonic and melodic means beyond its dominant.

resolution to a fully-diminished sonority and the prolonged absence of the new tonic, eventually achieved by the fourth measure within the contrasting section. Rather than building in any intensity or excitement in the character or narrative, the moment becomes counterintuitive as the protagonist becomes significantly more introspective and melancholy. Any semblance of celebratory connotations are removed through both pitch centricity and harmonic resolution. Jack's final line, confirmed by a strong PAC, emphasizes the prophetic nature of the section: "There's something out there,/far from my home./A longing that/I've never known." This unknown beckoning, with respect to both key and meter, will manifest itself in the following song, expanding the atypical features that have been introduced.



Music Example 5.6. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Lament" [0:07:48 – 0:08:16].



Music Example 5.6, continued.

The entire form is repeated, with the only modification an expansion of the modulation to a whole tone (E minor → F♯ minor). Despite concluding with a PAC, the final pitch (F♯) adds to the longing within the protagonist, acting as a long-term leading tone to the dominant of the "reality key" established in "This is Halloween" that prevails throughout the filmworld.

What's This?

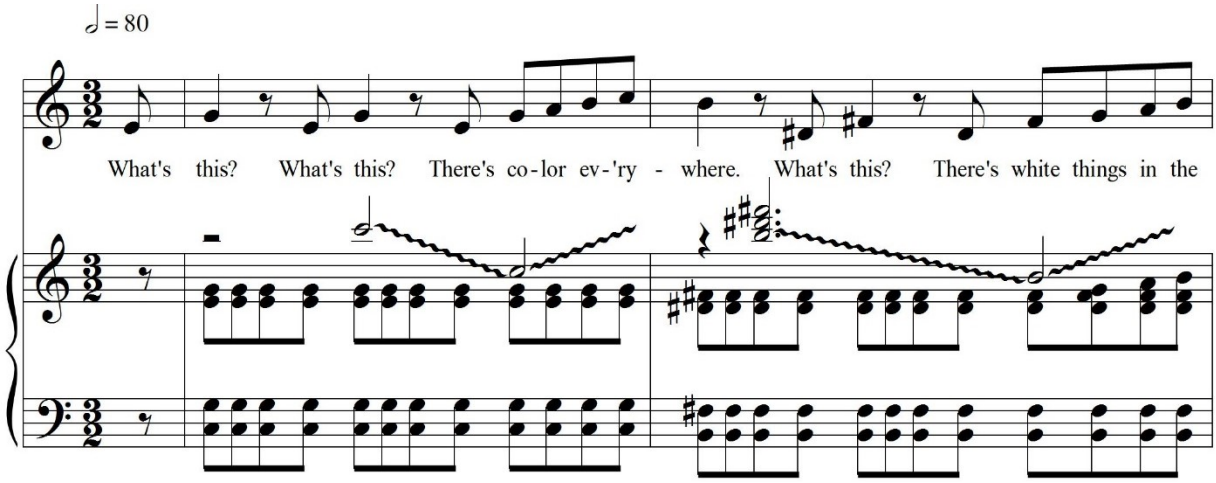
While Halloween Town represents the "reality" realm of the filmworld, Christmas Town epitomizes its antithesis as filmic fantasy. Rather than the duple metric groupings/divisions and (bipartite) chromatic motion of harmony that dominate all associations with Halloween, Christmas Town and its corresponding iconography is symbolized through triple groupings/divisions, and (tripartite) disjunct harmonic motion, in addition to being the only song residing in a primarily major tonality. As Jack begins questioning his surroundings and pondering the reality of this extraordinary new world in the first verse, the harmony toggles between C+ → B+ chords, with the **PS/SP** transformations creating unidirectional and uniform semitonal motion in all voices identified in Figure 5.5.[16] This

[16] As discussed with Scott Murphy, approaching the harmonic motion in "What's This?" as transpositional, rather than transformational, can yield identical results in terms of analytical content with considerably more terminological clarity immediately available. If utilizing transpositions as a means of discussing the motion between chords, the move from C+ → B+ → C+ can be described as T_{11} and T_1, respectively; the **PL/LP** motion of "This is Halloween" and characteristic "Halloween Town" space can likewise be described as transpositional in nature, with **PL** identified as a T_4 and **LP** defined

strongly contrasts with the contrary (bidirectional) or similar but nonuniform activity which dominated the introduction to the filmworld's reality of Halloween Town.

Figure 5.5. Uniform semitonal motion of **PS**/**SP** transformation in "What's This?" progression.

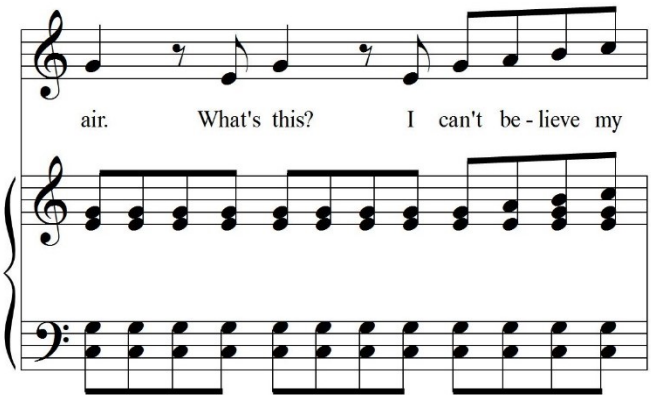
The metric and hypermetric organization of Jack's first verse also depicts the oddity of his environment. While the pursuit of something novel presented triple divisions in his previous lament, this discovery of a physical form confirms its relative exoticness through the establishment and emphasis of tripartite structures. The first two lines feature both metric groupings of three successive half-note tacti into measures of $\frac{3}{2}$ and a hypermetric grouping of three successive $\frac{3}{2}$ measures, producing a [3x3] musical design as Jack summarizes his physical surroundings (see Example 5.7).[17]



Music Example 5.7. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "What's This?" [0:14:58 – 0:15:06].[18]

as T_8. The emphasis of a transformational reading over transpositional is two-fold: by focusing on the parsimonious voice leading between successive harmonies, the duple/triple division of voice leading space is clearly identified as opposed to placing all progressions on a uniform transpositional plane. Similarly, the notion of "Christmas Town" characteristic voice leading space utilizing secondary transformational label in the compact ("two-transformation") process provides both symmetry and contrast with its Halloween Town counterpart, which can be expressed as two primary transformations.

[17] While the placement of the text on the downbeat suggests an elision of metrical units, thus creating a four-beat structure, the harmonic rhythm of the passage (three tacti per chord), combined with the anacrusis, undergirds the three-beat unit.



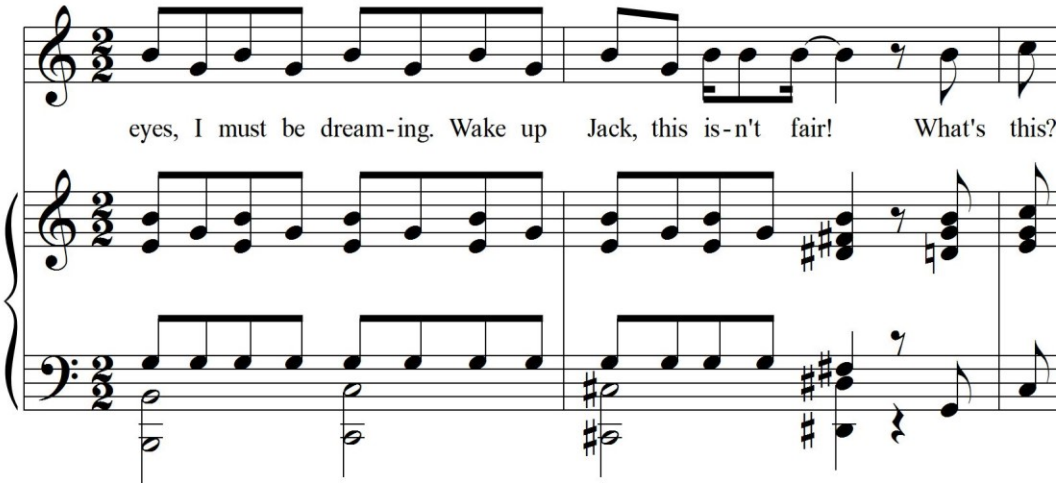
Music Example 5.7, continued.

This [3x3] metrical structure appears only four times throughout the song: once in the instrumental introduction, and at the beginning of each of the three verses. Its lack of consistent, consecutive repetition to establish expectation helps develop a quasi-metrical effect for the [3x3] pattern for the measure group, creating a sense of "special emphasis" for each of the appearances of this measure group.[19]

When the focal point of the lyrics shifts inwards and centers on Jack himself, a token of Halloween Town ("I can't believe my/eyes. I must be dreaming./Wake up, Jack, this isn't fair!/What's this?"), a corresponding shift appears metrically, pivoting from the triple/fantastic to the duple/reality axis and utilizing a [2x2] metric design (see Example 5.8). This change in meter is paired with a change in both harmonic rhythm and progression, as the self-reflection is combined with an ascending chromatic bass line over a largely static E- harmony, leading to a quick cadential VII → V → I progression within the final pulse.

[18] The commercially available piano songbook produced by Hal Leonard, under the supervision of Walt Disney's music publication, uses a quarter note as the beat unit, as opposed to the half note utilized in the transcription. As mentioned previously in Chapter 4, notational discrepancies such as this are irrelevant when mapping perceptual relationships, so long as the corresponding relationships remain in proportion.

[19] See Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed. Joseph N. Straus (New York: Oxford, 1999), 92-93. Its appearance as a three-measure group lends further credence to the notion of a quasi-metrical effect; Schacter summarizes, "Quasi-metrical effects occur particularly strongly with three-measure groups. In speaking of such groups, Schenker often used the German term *Takttriole* (triple of whole measures). In so doing he tacitly acknowledged their quasi-metrical effect even where the group in question does not form part of a repetitive pattern" (93).



Music Example 5.8. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "What's This?" [0:15:06 – 0:15:07].

The full verse, lasting thirteen total tacti, thus creates a 3^2+2^2 metric-hypermetric structure that consecutively presents both respective worlds as unique entities in both harmony and meter. The correlation between lyrics and meter is expressed in Figure 5.6.

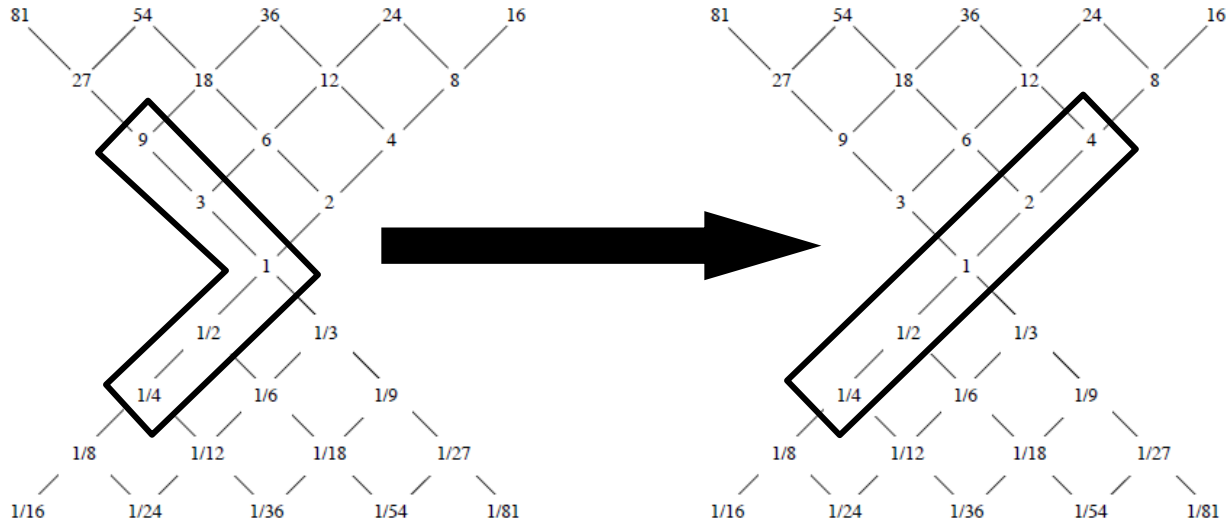


Figure 5.6. *Zeitnetz* comparison of Christmas Town and Halloween Town in first verse of "What's This?"

A retrospective harmonic comparison of the tonal realms of Halloween and Christmas Towns reveals significant symmetries and discrepancies that tie in to Jack's previous lament and the semitonal shift which concluded his soliloquy. With a shared tonic, the holiday worlds are separated by the major/minor dichotomy and, thus, the mediant of the tonic triad—the presence of E or E♭ within a stable tonal environment as a member of the primary tonic chord or as the tonal center. This dividing barrier (identified in Figure 5.7), much like the physical divide between the holiday worlds within the filmworld, forms a corresponding "Tonal Hinterlands," a harmonic space analogous to the decrepit woods within Halloween Town where, as residents "venture" into this territory, enter an alternate fantastic realm that encapsulates Christmas.

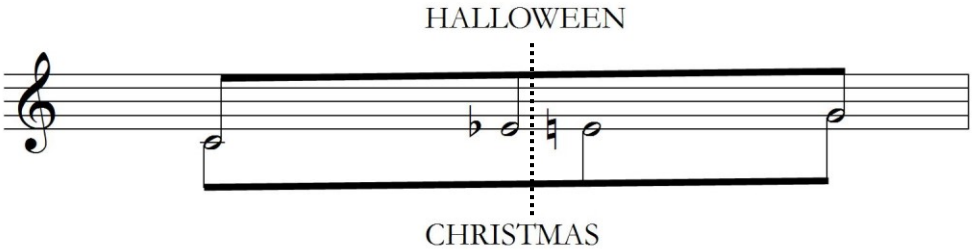
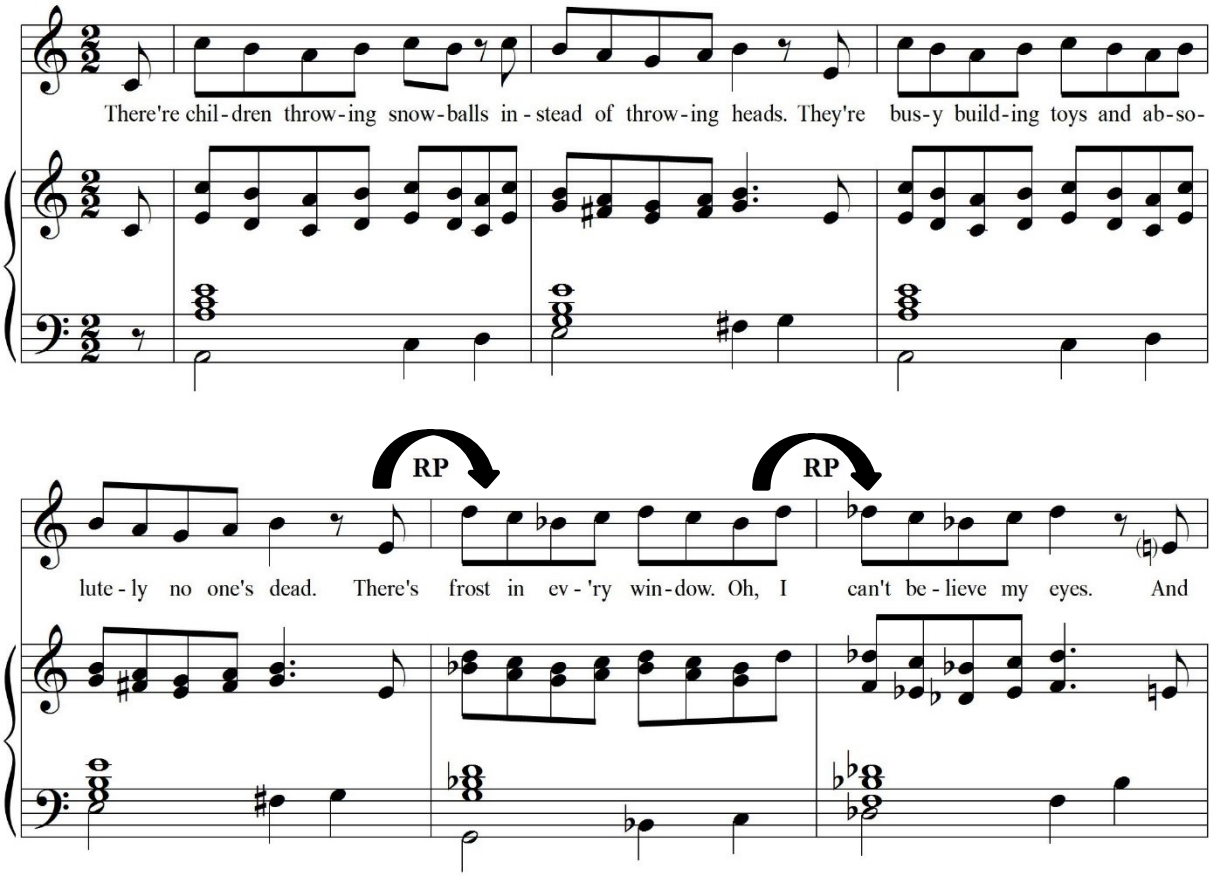


Figure 5.7. "Tonal Hinterlands" between Halloween Town and Christmas Town.

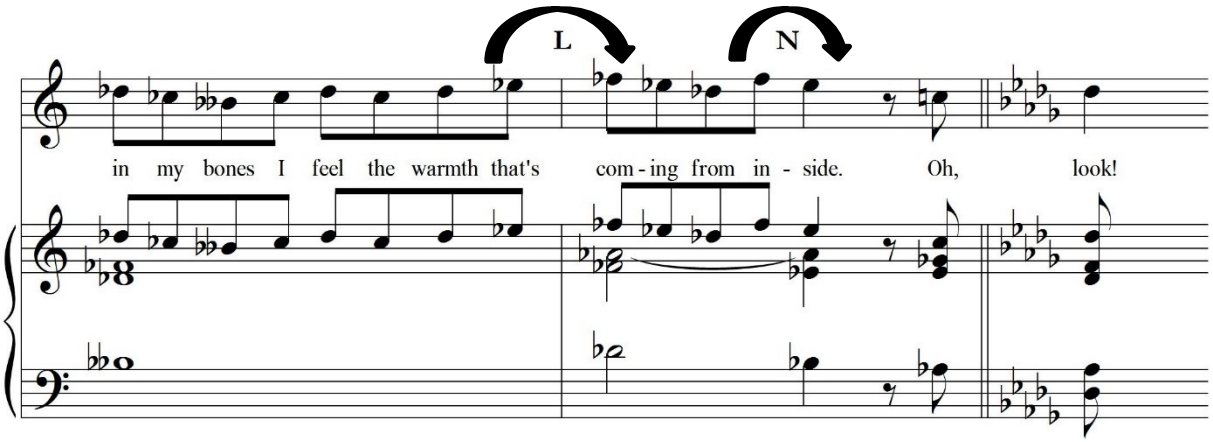
The modulation to E minor and sudden introduction of triple divisions introduced during "Jack's Lament" do not simply provide an introspective glimpse into a plagued soul, but more importantly, a foreshadowing of what precisely will fill the emptiness that has grown within the Pumpkin King, and what outside force seems to be calling him that has remained otherwise unknown. The conclusion in F♯ minor keeps Jack's dilemma ultimately unresolved, perpetuating his longing by leaving his emotions precariously balanced on a tonal center seeking resolution (on a grand scale) to G—a secure location with respect to both Halloween and Christmas Towns.

When Jack's lyric focus moves to a more explicit comparison of the activities between the two worlds, there is a more pronounced return of minor-key emphasis and duple groupings, emphasizing that Jack's point of comparison is drawn from his reality in Halloween Town (see Example 5.9). Beginning in the relative key of A minor, Jack notices the considerable absence of macabre features, such as severed heads and deceased souls, as the harmony alternates between the tonic and its minor

dominant. Successive **RP** transformations, reintroducing the chromatic voice leading more commonly associated with Halloween Town, further pull the harmony away from the C major/A minor diatonic realm and begin to shift the tonic upwards by semitone as C♯/D♭ is emphasized more prominently. This tonal shift (an **SP** motion identical to the first verse) lasts for approximately three measures, still preserving the chromatic motion, quickly gives way to an **L** transformation that presages the forthcoming key—in the parallel minor. The subsequent **N** creates a firm half cadence in the new key, completing the upwards semitonal shift that mirrors the building excitement within Jack as he continues to venture further into his environment and discover the missing pieces from his life.



Music Example 5.9. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "What's This?" [0:15:27 – 0:15:41].



Music Example 5.9, continued.

The ascending semitonal modulation and its method of achievement, through an unfolding of the **S**LIDE transformation and subsequent **P** transformation, not only incorporates the representative harmonic motion of fantastic space within the filmworld, but also participates in the formal and tonal design of the song as a whole (see Figure 5.8). The ascending harmonic gesture depicts both Jack's building excitement as he explores his new surroundings as well as expands idiosyncratic fantasy progressions that separate narrative spaces. The resultant key centers create a tripartite form that furthers the division of the two worlds along the real/fantastic, duple/triple divide.

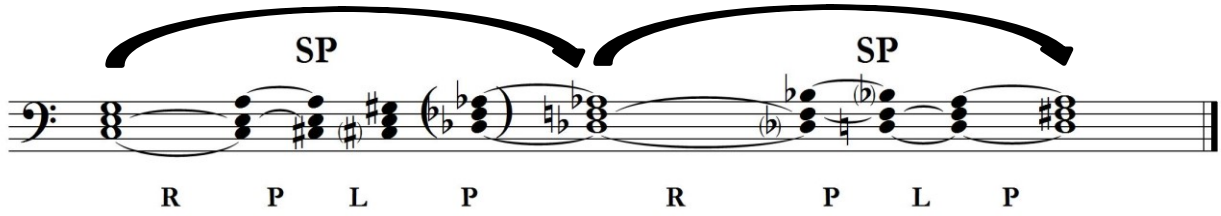
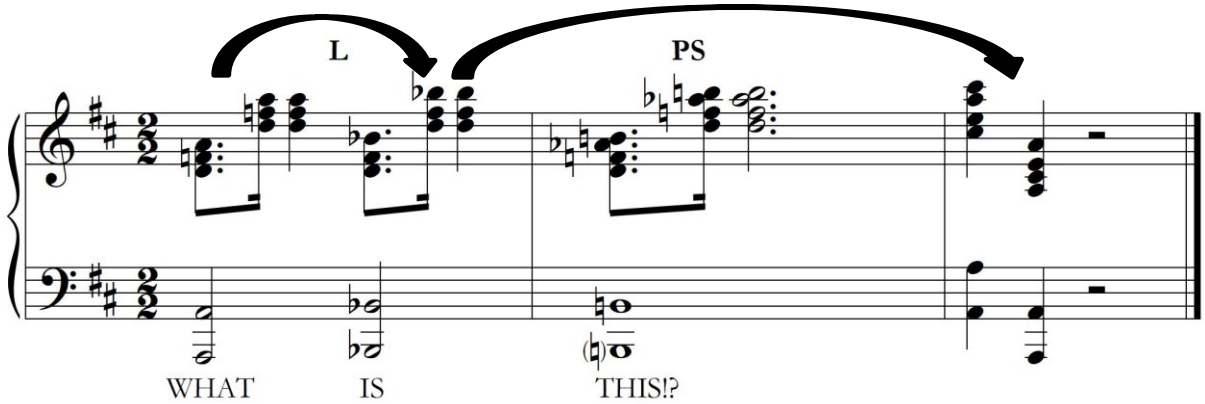


Figure 5.8. Tonal design of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "What's This?"

The end of the abridged final verse pairs one harmonic transformation from each holiday world as Jack makes his ultimate exclamation of confusion and excitement. Upon fathoming that his emptiness from Halloween is beginning to be fulfilled, Jack realizes that he must know precisely every intricacy of his surroundings. His final shriek, set to the progression D- → B♭+ → B^{o7} → A+, leads to a strong yet unresolved half cadence that matches his need for closure and fulfillment after

discovering Christmas (see Example 5.10). The initial gesture (**L**) following the change of mode echoes the celebratory ambiance of "This is Halloween," recalling the progression which confirmed the lyrics "In this town we call home."[20] The second transformation (**PS**), interrupted by the dissonant fully-diminished seventh chord adding significant tension to the moment, insinuates the passage from Halloween and into Christmas. Though unresolved through the half cadence, the harmonic progression foreshadows Jack's plan to achieve fulfillment within his life: unification of two worlds.



Music Example 5.10. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "What's This?" [0:17:02 – 0:17:06:].

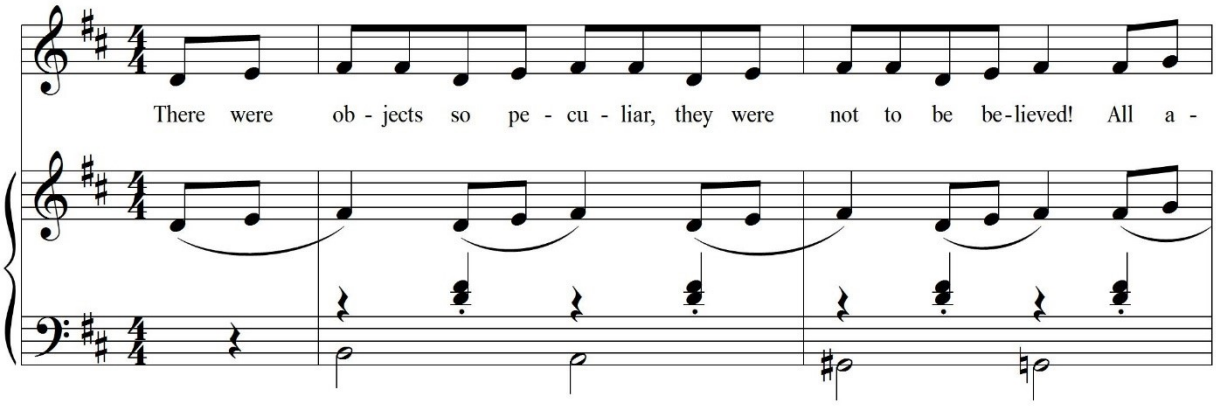
The engagement of triple hypermetric space extending beyond the initial grouping layer, coupled with the distinctiveness of the atypical voice leading adds to the sense of the fantastic and wonderment with respect to the (Western tonal) filmgoer's enculturated codes. By incorporating both triple metric and hypermetric layers, a greater series of durational values (9:3) is utilized when compared to its corresponding duple counterpart (8:4:2). The relative rarity of multiple successive layers of triple meter beyond the tactus, combined with the higher sum of total durational values, adds to the suspension of disbelief and facilitates the creation of the separation of the two worlds. Simultaneously, the semitonal separation of consecutive major chords is of considerable rarity in classical music; its lone diatonic analogue exists in a minor key (V → ♭VI) and generally serves in the capacity of a deceptive resolution, a closing gesture rather than primary/initiating. Fantastic musical

[20] The use of **L** to express jubilation also matches the characteristic Elfman harmonic technique discussed in Chapter 3.

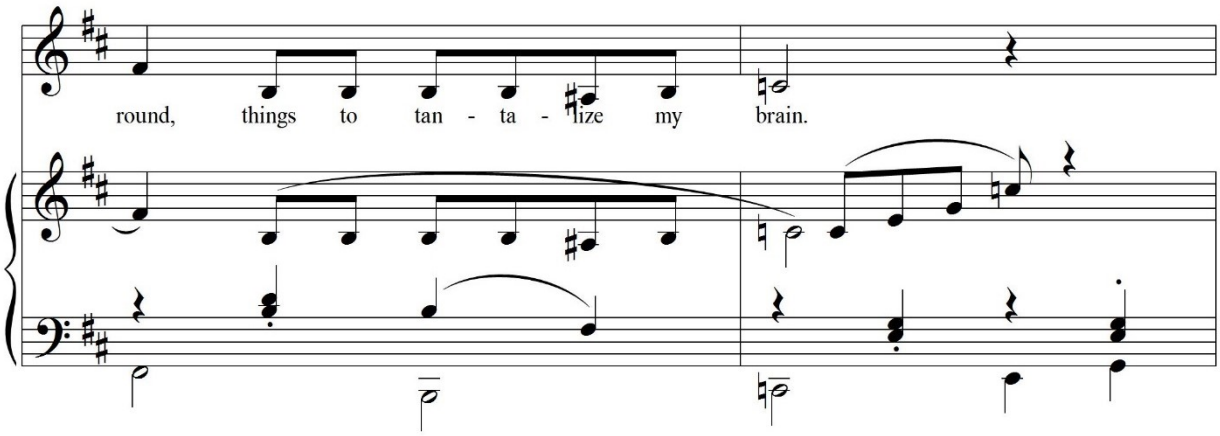
space is achieved relative to both the filmworld and the filmgoer, bringing Jack and his audience into a simultaneous sensation of disbelief.

Town Meeting Song

Having just returned from the fantastic world of all things Christmas, Jack wishes to share his experience and excitement with the inhabitants of Halloween Town (see Example 5.11). Having finally found the missing pieces from his previous lament, the descending "dreaming" bass line returns with references to the ascending, three-note stepwise motive. A strong duple meter prevails in all levels of the metric hierarchy as Jack begins to sing, validating his return to Halloween Town. Seeking to draw his companions closer to the fantastic possibilities of Christmas, however, the harmonic motion draws more from the preceding song; the opening progression of B- → C+(**LRL**) is a slightly modified form of a characteristic "fantasy-realm" progression, which can be interpreted as extending the **PS** motion to **PSP** as a means to accommodate the change of quality in the first chord.



Music Example 5.11. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Town Meeting Song" [0:21:35 – 0:21:42].



Music Example 5.11, continued.

The adjustments to the harmonic progression result in a combination of characteristic voice leading tendencies of both narrative spaces (identified in Figure 5.9), creating an overlapping structure as Jack attempts to fuse the two worlds for the attendees. Unidirectional motion of all three chord members is a token feature of Christmas Town harmonic tendencies, resulting in root motion by semitone, while disparate distances between members, highly atypical from the fantasy world, remains a hallmark of Halloween Town.

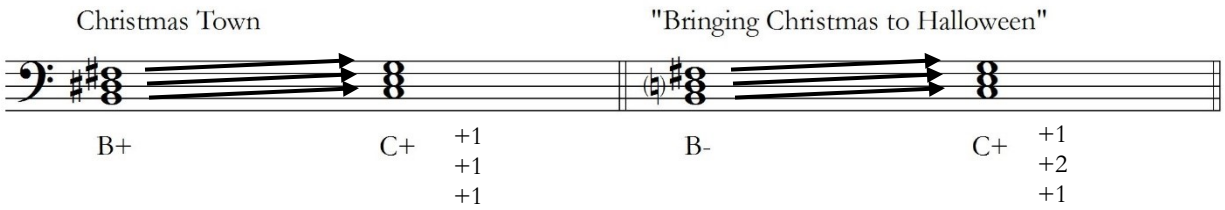


Figure 5.9. Comparison of characteristic Christmas Town progression and its Halloween modification and the corresponding effects on voice leading work.

Jack decides that the best way to convey his experiences is through a visual display of the wonders of Christmas, pulling back the curtains on the stage to reveal a makeshift Christmas tree along with other simulated yuletide items. This grand reveal is paired with a gradual shift in submetric organization; while duple patterns remain prevalent in the metric and hypermetric hierarchy, the first appearance of physical objects from Jack's dreams and experiences bring about triple divisions. Much like the first appearance of such structures in "Jack's Lament," their significance is representational of

the fantastic rather than literal. Because these objects are manifestations of his experiences in Christmas Town and created by Jack himself, their metric identity remains entrenched below the level of the tactus.

Retaining the same harmonic and melodic outline within this new submetric design, Jack begins his show-and-tell of Christmas Town with a present, holding up a box covered with black and white wrapping paper and a red bow. Its appearance greatly confuses the townspeople, and their inquiries as to its contents focus on macabre possibilities that could cause harm to its recipient. Their confusion is mirrored harmonically as F♯+ triads alternate with fully diminished seventh chords. The resulting voice leading work of the failed dominant resolutions emphasizes the lack of connection the residents have made with the object and the spirit of Christmas, as the chord root splits in opposite directions by differing amounts (ascending semitone, descending whole tone) while the remaining voices remain stagnant (see Figure 5.10). Tonally, the moment reflects an atypical deceptive resolution of the dominant chord, failing to move beyond its functional role as its root splits in opposite directions to form the highly dissonant (harmonically and, for the characters, cognitively) diminished seventh.

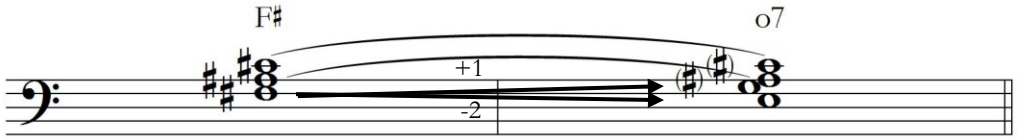


Figure 5.10. Voice leading work of townspeople's confusion.

Adding briefly to the cognitive discord within the moment is a change of bass, alternating between staccato F♯ and G and creating a duple-division layer that provides momentary metric dissonance with the tonic accent (see Example 5.12).

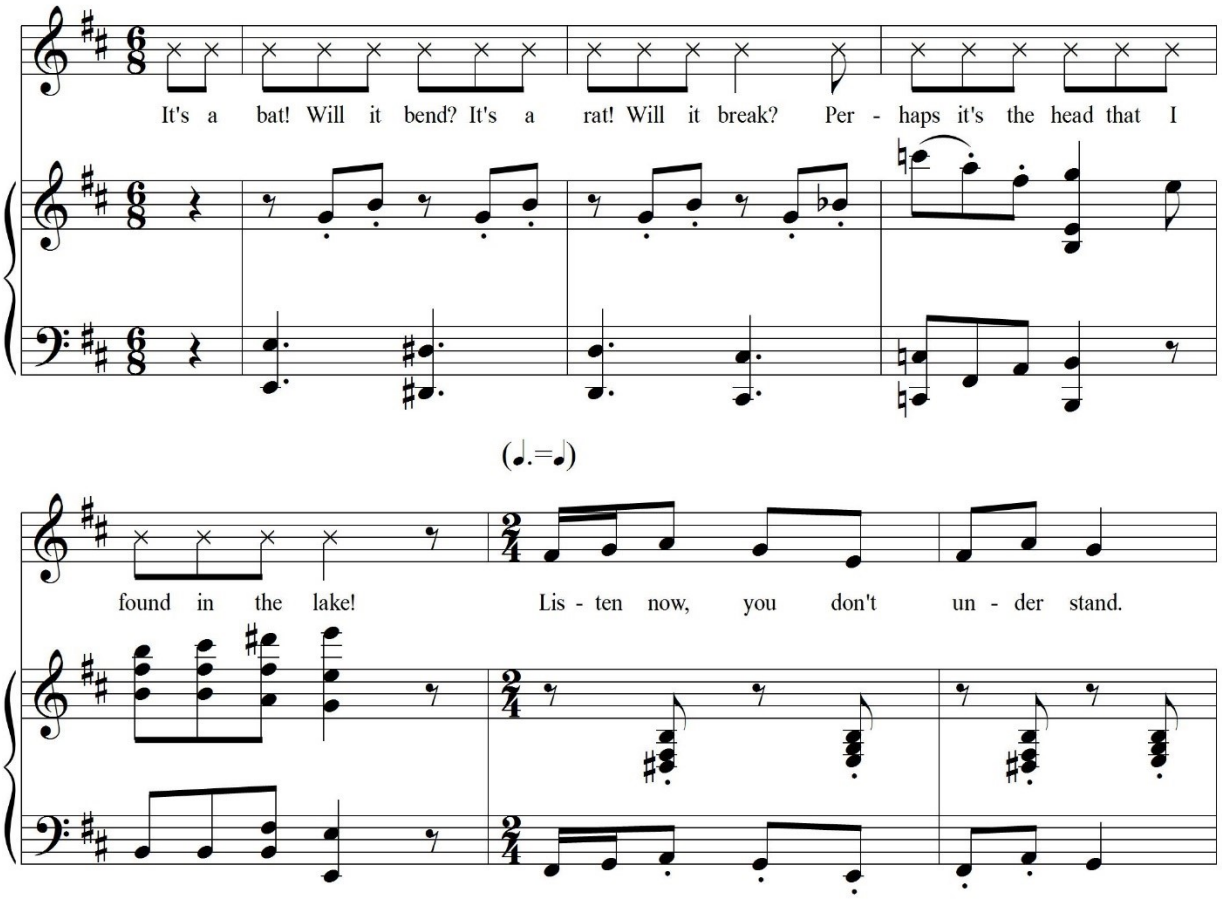
This is a thing called a "pres-ent." The whole thing starts with a box. A box?

Is it steel? Are thre locks? Is it filled with a pox? A pox? How de-light-ful a pox!

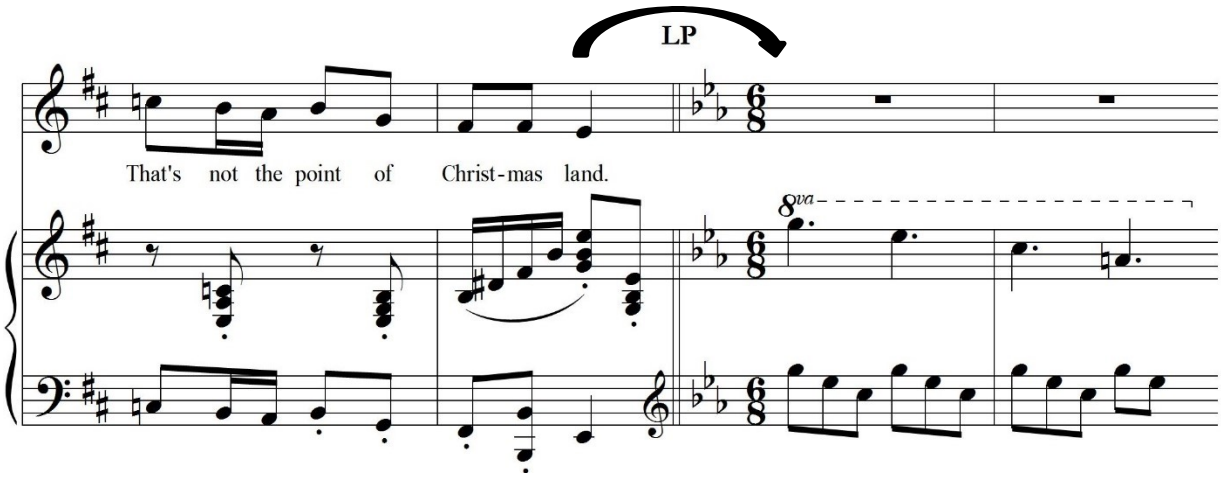
Music Example 5.12. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Town Meeting Song" [0:22:00 – 0:22:19].

Attempting to restart his presentation, Jack continues with the exhibition, building on the possibilities of the present's contents and its ultimate purpose: surprise. For the townspeople, such a

surprise would likely trigger a fear response, providing the first appreciable cognitive link with which to understand Jack's fantasy. Sensing this newfound illusion, the townspeople seize upon not only the dreaming descending bass line, but also the new key of E minor, insinuating their appropriation of "Christmas" which is confirmed by the PAC. Despite the apparent breakthrough in comprehension, Jack must rein in the attendees and get the meeting back on track before the wrong perception warps reality (see Example 5.13). To regain control of the situation, Jack's return to the musical texture coincides with a return of duple divisions and the inclusion of duple subdivisions, accentuating the return to reality and showing the citizens that their apparent understanding is flawed. When attempting to continue with his show-and-tell (again a "false fantasy" in $\frac{6}{8}$), the song modulates to C minor, endeavoring to establish a stronger link with his compatriots by utilizing the home key of Halloween Town—achieved by a direct modulation through a Halloween-characteristic **LP** transformation.



Music Example 5.13. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Town Meeting Song" [0:22:31 – 0:22:41].



Music Example 5.13, continued.

Jack's second object for display in this Halloween key is a stocking, but an essential lyric proclamation within C minor by Jack shows that he too remains unfamiliar in the true meanings of his experiences. While he is the lone individual within Halloween Town who has been subjected to the fantastic realm of Christmas, he remains unaware of what exactly the "oversized sock" is that he is holding or where its placement within the home should be ("on the wall," rather than upon a mantle). Unsurprisingly, the immediate response focuses on severed rotting limbs, which Jack immediately corrects and steers towards more Halloween-appreciable items, specifically candy and small toys. The parallel to potentially spooky "treats" once again stirs the excitement of the crowd, and their exhilaration brings forth another temporary modulation by a perfect fourth to F minor. Jack once again must admonish the crowd for their haste, but ultimately surrenders to their eagerness. Unable to quell their enthusiasm, he must find a way to connect the two worlds, and can only do so through one figure: their respective leaders. In so doing, Jack's concluding remarks bring a full return of the opening material that was cast in the duple metric hierarchy, set in the home key of Halloween Town. This ruler of Christmas Town, "Sandy Claws," is depicted as analogous as to Jack himself, a "fearsome king with a deep mighty voice," an awe-inspiring menace who controls the air just as Jack rules the land. The celebration of the townspeople does nothing for Jack, however, as their understanding is misguided. The half cadence achieved at the end of the song belies the previously

achieved PAC which set the crowd into their frenzy, substantiating his discontent of their misunderstanding while simultaneously suggesting his as well.

Jack's Obsession

Following the "successful failure" of the town meeting and the oppressive need to manifest the sentiments of Christmas Town for both himself and for everyone in the land of Halloween, Jack locks himself in his observatory as he tries to deduce the mathematical and scientific essence of yuletide spirit. The caw of the skeleton rooster as the sun rises and shines upon the lonely spire of the observatory and the ticking of the clock tower set to wooden blocks confirms the restless night for the protagonist. The townspeople below are aware that their leader is lost from them mentally, with the locked observatory serving as a spatial metaphor between their home world and Jack's current (mental) location.

This disparity is further emphasized with the ticking clock and the singing townspeople on the streets directly below the observatory (see Example 5.14). The alternating strikes of the clock create a duple-metric timescape in which the filmworld begins unfolding. The singing denizens on the streets below are within a triple meter, creating a direct 2 vs. 3 conflict. Further complicating matters is the tonal instability, hovering overwhelmingly on G+ that is serving as a functional dominant chord within the primary key of C minor. The oddity of Halloween Town utilizing a triple meter at its primary level is relative to the central unseen protagonist: his relentless pursuit of any and all things Christmas within his isolated turret has temporarily reestablished the location of realistic space within the filmworld. Jack's work from the preceding scene reveals that he is attempting to recreate his experience—ultimately transmuting what was the fantastic into the real. In so doing, Halloween becomes the "Outsider" spatially and metaphorically, existing outside of Jack's self-contained and self-created Christmas space. By lingering on the dominant of both worlds, Jack remains in an unresolved physical/metaphysical suspension. The deceptive resolution of G+ → A♭+ brings echoes of Christmas Town voice leading space to Halloween Town within the minor tonality in a diatonic setting, yet the Vampire chorus remains blissfully unaware of the harmonic motion.

Moderately ♩ = 133

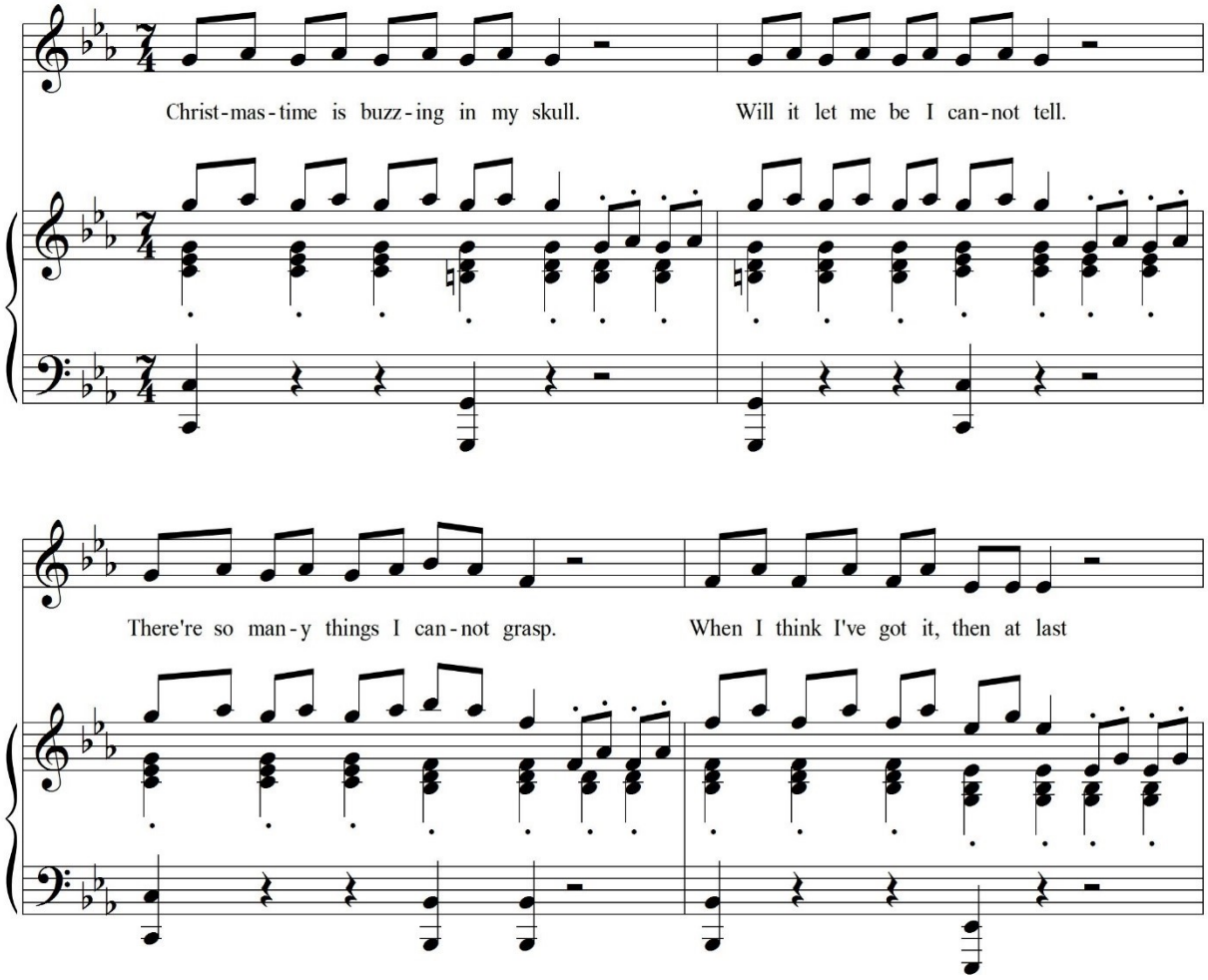
Some-thing's up with Jack, some-thing's up wtih Jack.

Don't know if we're ev-er going to get him back.

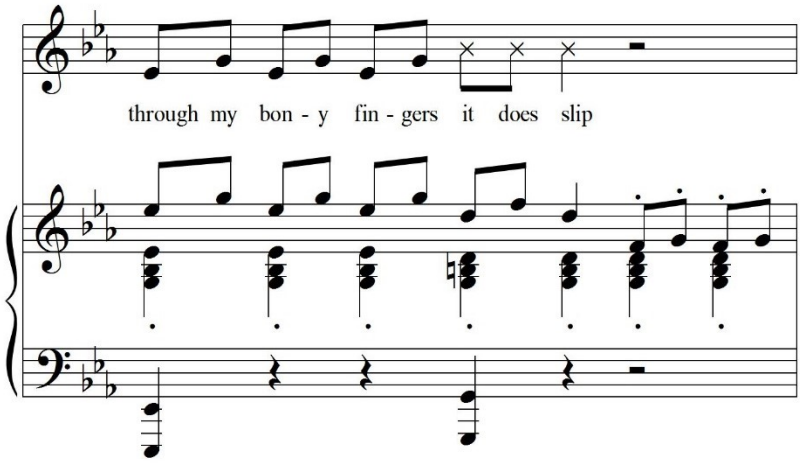
Music Example 5.14. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Obsession" [0:30:45 – 0:31:00].

The upward camera lift segues from the false-fantastic space of the streets and directly into Jack's tower, reconfiguring the filmworld within the new setting; facilitating this transition is two measures of a simple quadruple meter, refocusing the sense of reality within Jack's space and character (see Example 5.15). As Jack begins singing, however, his despair reaches its musical pinnacle. The

protagonist is no longer simply torn between two worlds, but rather trying to find a way to make both exist simultaneously. This divergent holiday construction manifests itself in an asymmetrical metric composition, resulting in a septuple meter that unites the extraordinary (3) with the real (4), the harmonic rhythm driving the overall metric design. Not only on the basic meter, but the hypermetric structure reflects this united worlds narrative, creating a quintuple hypermetric design of 3+2 that outlines the initial tonic triad of the home key—Jack's inescapable physical home reality of C minor.

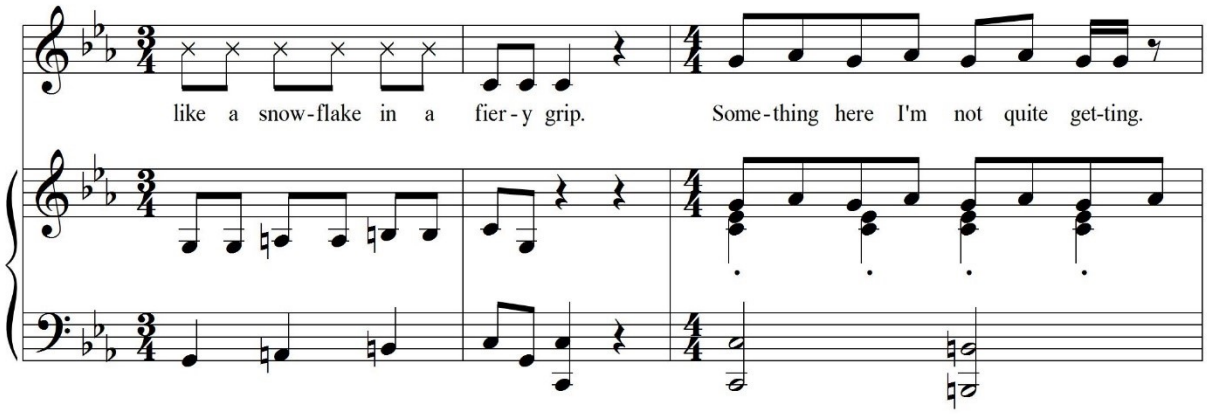


Music Example 5.15. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Obsession" [0:31:20 – 0:31:35].

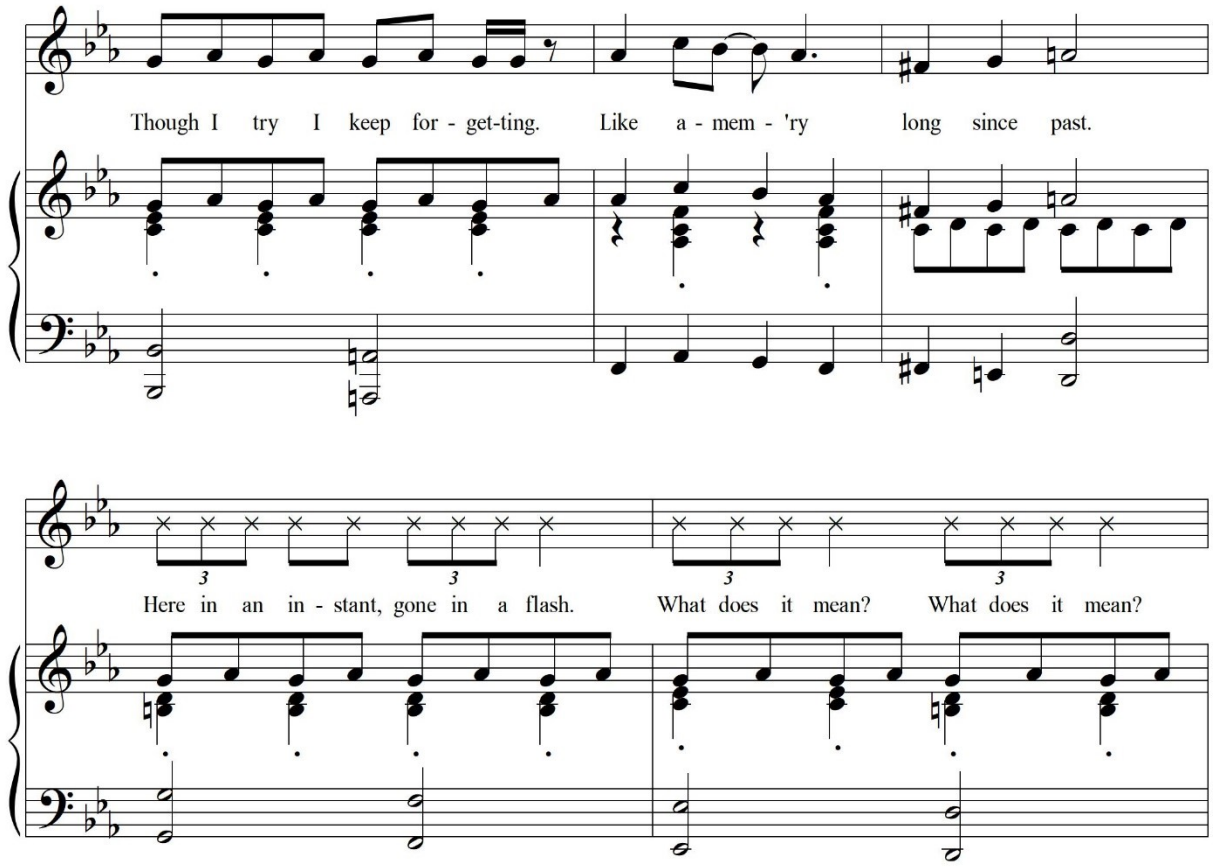


Music Example 5.15, continued.

This realization that his illusion is quickly dissipating is set in a brief meter change, providing two measures of simple triple and cadential closure in C minor (see Example 5.16). The need to delve deeper into his physical and mental labors conjure two predominant features previously established of this pursuit: the descending (predominantly chromatic) "dreamer" bass line, and the prevailing duple metric hierarchy in all levels. Desperately calling out to this fading dream, Jack's speech patterns introduce a triplet division, further complicating his inner turmoil as he explores the intricacies of the holiday conundrum.



Music Example 5.16. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Obsession" [0:31:36 – 0:31:49].

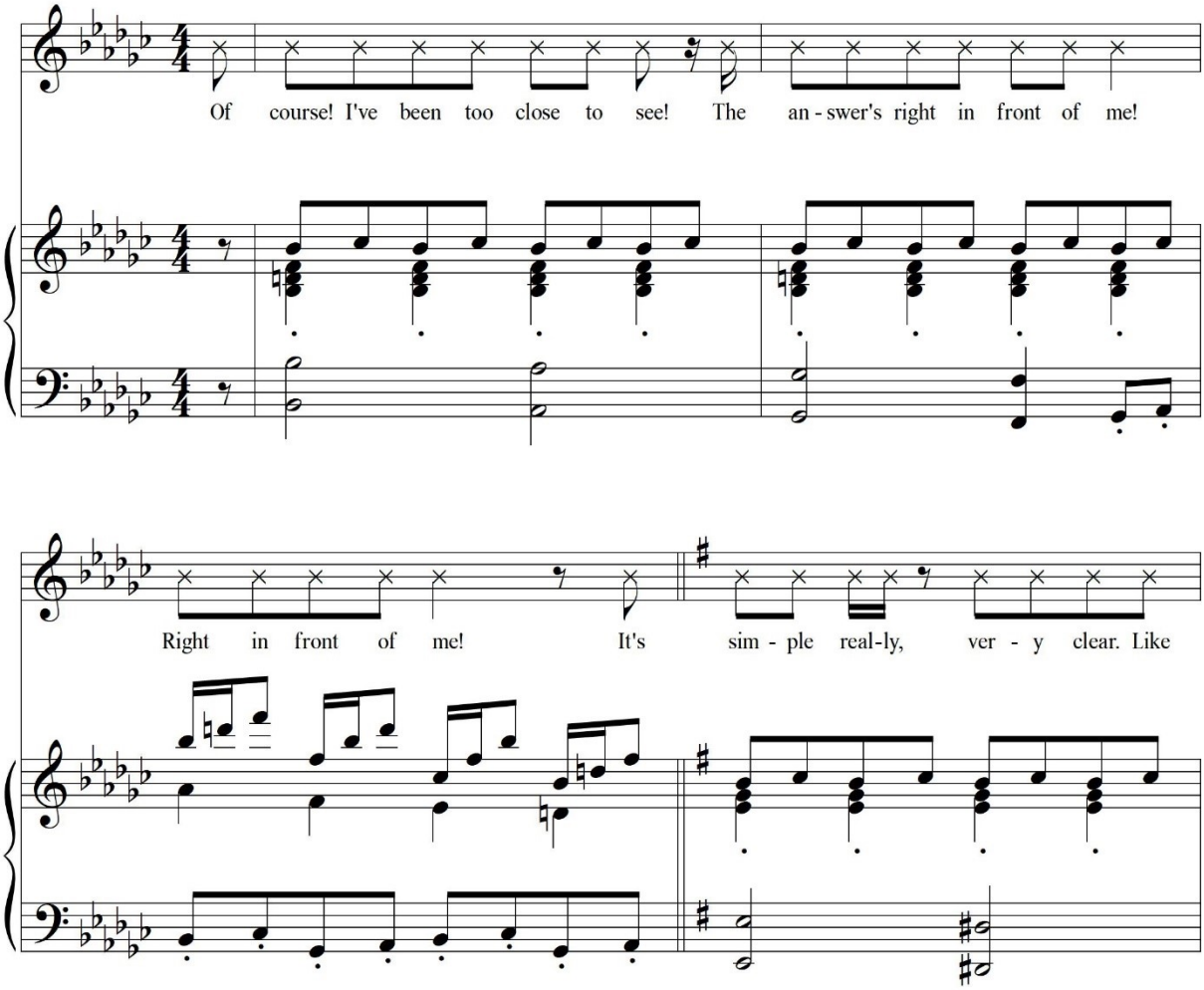


Music Example 5.16, continued.

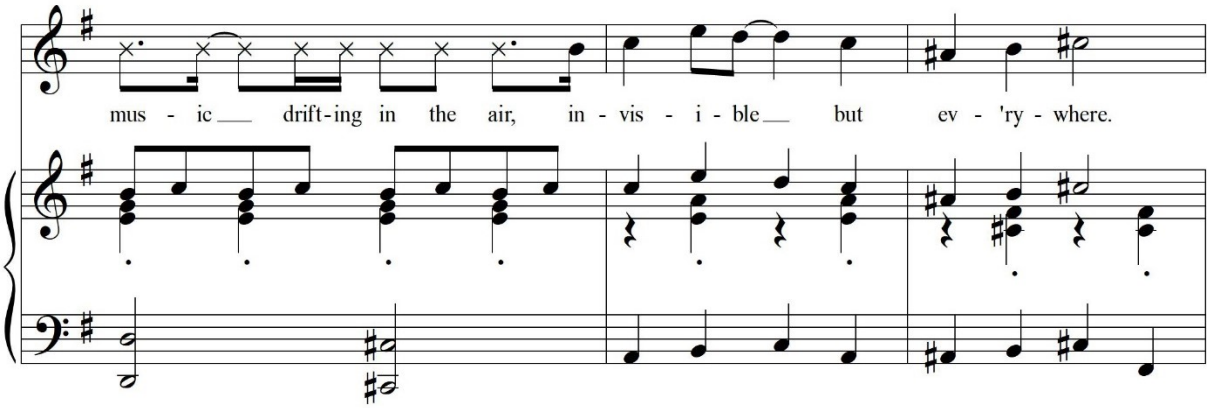
Unfortunately, Jack's obsessive postulating is only leading him further away from potential resolutions, confirmed by the **RP** motion and direct modulation to E♭ minor, the pivotal pitch/tonal center to Halloween Town. A subsequent return of the septuple meter and quintuple hypermeter only adds to Jack's internal strife. The deeper Jack pursues his inquiries into Christmas, the further away he becomes from the ultimate solutions he is endeavoring to discover, mirrored in the harmonic and metric organization of his soliloquy.

The moment of epiphany that provides the solution to manifest Christmas as his own reality is captured by a modulation that is not only idiomatic of Christmas Town harmonic space, but also crosses the Tonal Hinterlands between the unique pitch identifiers for the respective worlds (see Example 5.17). Upon realizing that his undertaking has led him down false avenues, Jack surrenders to a simple and straightforward answer: the essence of Christmas spirit is not deducible or

demonstrable through the scientific method. The crux of Jack's fantasy was in the experience, rather than the objects, and the experience is what should be shared throughout Halloween Town and across the holiday worlds. This moment of clarity and balance within Jack's pursuit is marked through the usurping of the distinct Christmas tonal center and in the surrendering the discrete Halloween tonal identity. The **PS** transformation between tonal centers further pulls Jack towards his fantastic experience, incorporating idiosyncratic harmonic elements of fantasy to confirm Jack's epiphany. The moment is immediately shared with the townspeople, and Jack's plan is finally revealed to all including the filmgoer: Christmas will belong to Halloween.



Music Example 5.17. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Jack's Obsession" [0:32:44: --0:32:56].

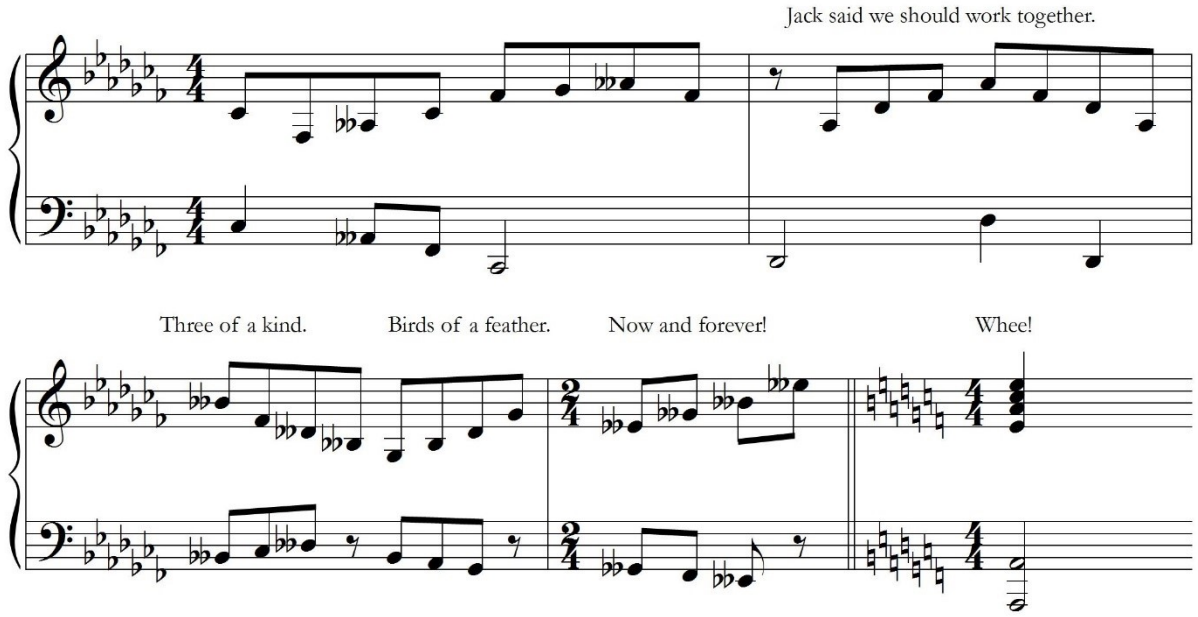


Music Example 5.17, continued.

Kidnap the Sandy Claws

Central to Jack's plan is the capture of Christmas Town's iconic leader and his substitution with his Halloween counterpart. To complete the nefarious plot, Jack employs Lock, Shock, and Barrel, the town's finest Trick-or-Treaters and the youngsters in the employ of Halloween Town's most sinister resident, Oogie Boogie (see Example 5.18). In a testament to the great distance between the "true spirit" of Christmas with its iconic leader and the revised version being developed by Jack and Halloween Town, the song begins in the tonally distant key of A♭ minor.[21] Playful pizzicato strings and a low bass clarinet solo add to the playfully macabre scene as the mercenaries march towards their target. Their decision on cooperation corresponds with a series of alternating descending thirds, as the progression F♭-→ D♭-→ B♭♭-→ G♭-→ E♭♭- leads to the opening refrain, bringing the children closer to Christmas Town through an enharmonic reinterpretation of a plagal progression into the relative minor (A) of Christmas. This cycle of descending thirds and the transformational pattern utilized within the passage is identified in Figure 5.11.

[21] With respect to Richard Cohn and his organization of hexatonic cycles, this key center would be considered the most tonally distant from C major, the tonal center of Christmas Town.



Music Example 5.18. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Kidnap the Sandy Claws" [0:35:55 – 0:36:00].

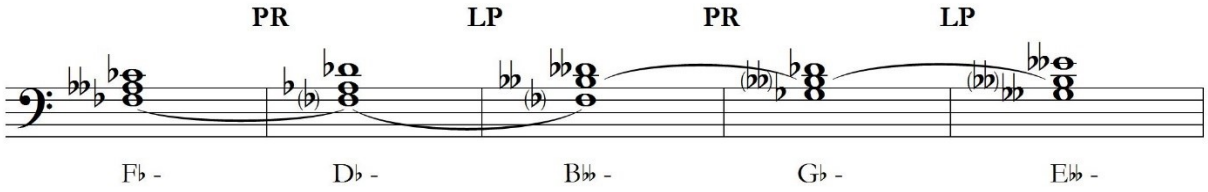
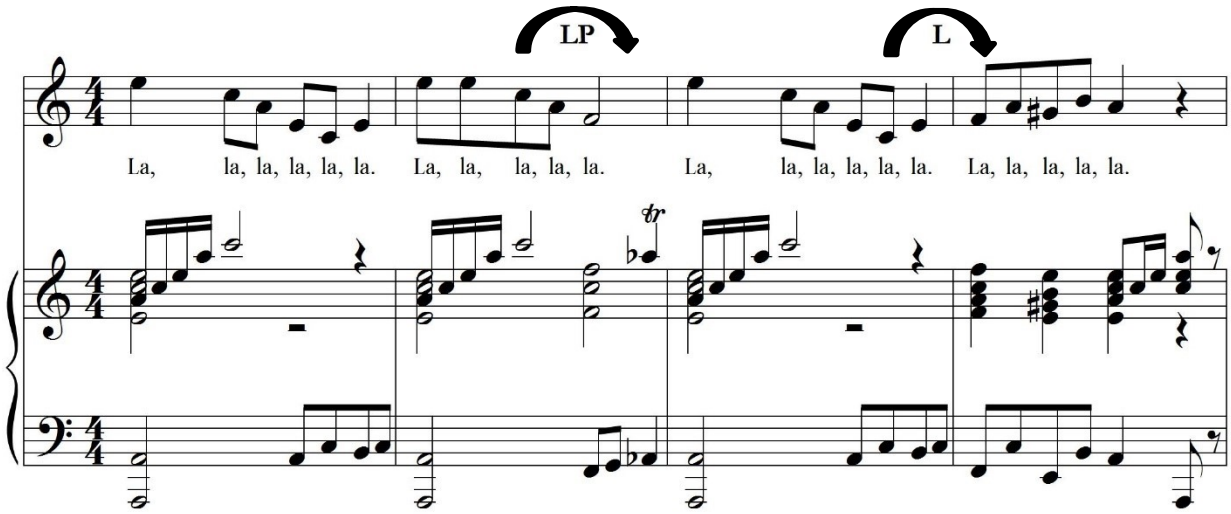


Figure 5.11. Reduction of **PR**/**LP** chain in "Kidnap the Sandy Claws."

The brief progression introduces a series of **PR**/**LP** transformations that firmly grounds the activity and motive in Halloween space as well as foreshadows a distinguishing progression that symbolizes the ironic morbid jubilee (see Example 5.19). As discussed in Chapter 3, the **LP** gesture achieves dual meaning in both the refrain and the verse, referring not simply to the capture and eventual torture and/or demise of Santa Claus, but also to the uncontrolled elation experienced by the children as they travel for their adventure. Similarly, the transformation appears abridged within the refrain, utilizing only **L** within the second idea of the phrase.

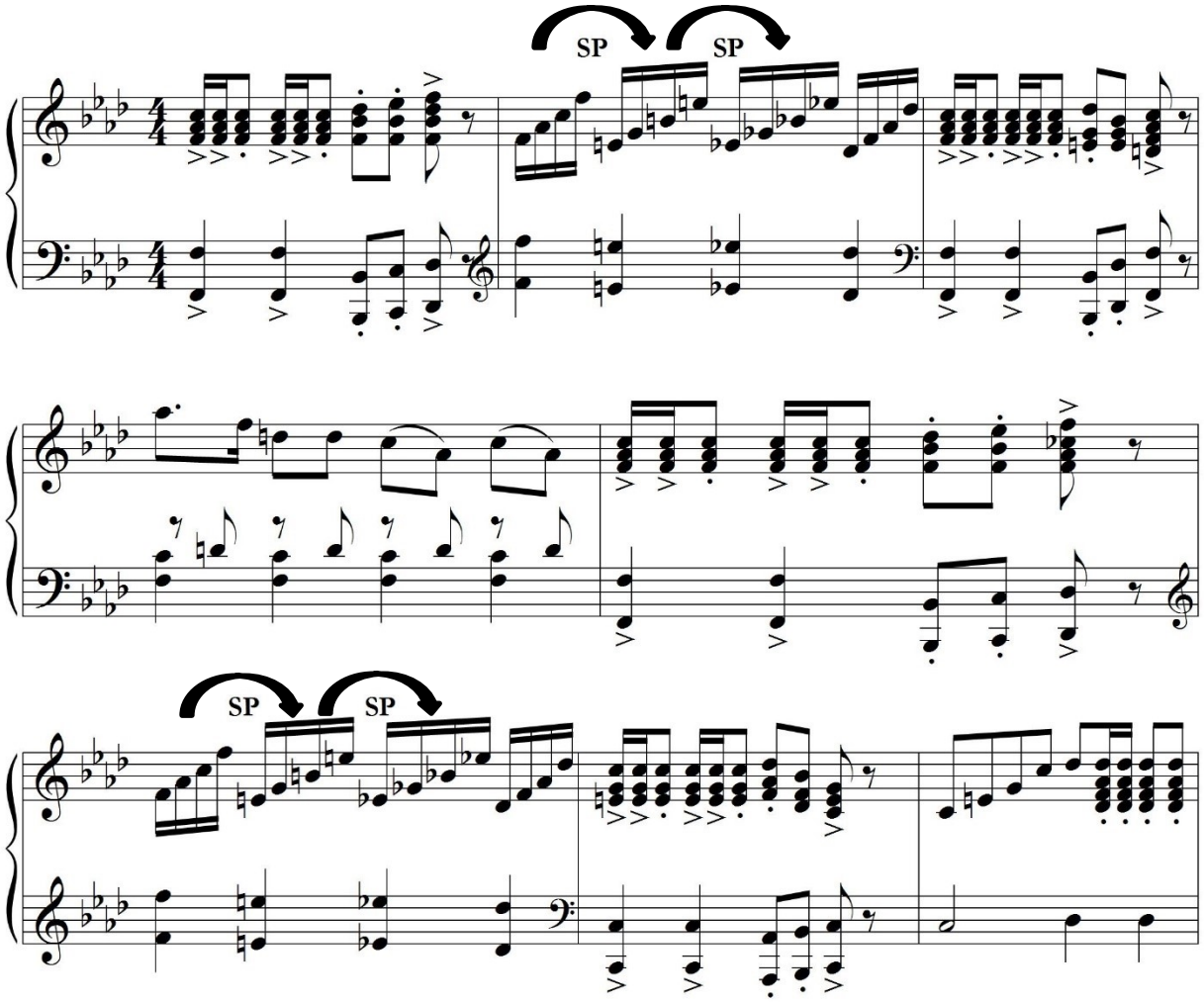


Music Example 5.19. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Kidnap the Sandy Claws" [0:36:00 – 0:36:07].

Contained within the cadential progression found throughout the verses and choruses of this song are Christmas-space **SP** gestures, providing commentary on the boys' mission. As they are the only Halloween Town residents other than Jack to venture into the physical realm of Christmas Town, they are afforded the characteristic gesture within their song. The subject of their mission, the grand symbol of Christmas, further places the children closer to Christmas narrative space. Their mischievous nature and intent to renege on their agreement with Jack, however, results in significant changes in the presentation of the characteristic harmonic features in terms of their tonal qualities. When first incorporated in "What's This?", the semitonal motion was often used in an oscillating gesture (**PS → SP**) as an initiating progression; throughout "Kidnap the Sandy Claws," the use of **SP** appears alone, often acting as a brief predominant in a cadential progression of VI → V → i.

Semitonal modulations between minor keys frequently appear throughout the song, referencing both the children's approach to Christmas Town as well as their ever-growing excitement at their impending nefarious deeds. Additionally, the appearance of the descending, mostly chromatic line merges elements of Jack and Santa Claus, serving as a simultaneous foretelling and past reference. While previously associated with Jack when appearing in the bass over a prolonged tonic harmony, it reappears in a much thinner texture in a higher register with a moving, arpeggiated harmonic line, such as the passage transcribed in Example 5.20. The chord motion overwhelmingly uses **SP**

transformations as the root motion descends primarily by semitone. This pattern first appears when the children make the initial reference to their master Oogie Boogie as well, creating the triumvirate between protagonist (melodically), antagonist (lyrically), and outsider (harmonically). In so doing, Lock, Shock, and Barrel reveal their true intent of completing Jack's plan of capturing Santa Claus, but breaking their word, acknowledged moments prior with crossed fingers behind their backs, and sending their prisoner to Oogie's lair in the depths below their treehouse. The descending line becomes both metaphorical and literal, representative of Santa Claus's eventual plunge into turmoil.



Music Example 5.20. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Kidnap the Sandy Claws" [0:36:35 – 0: 36: 49].

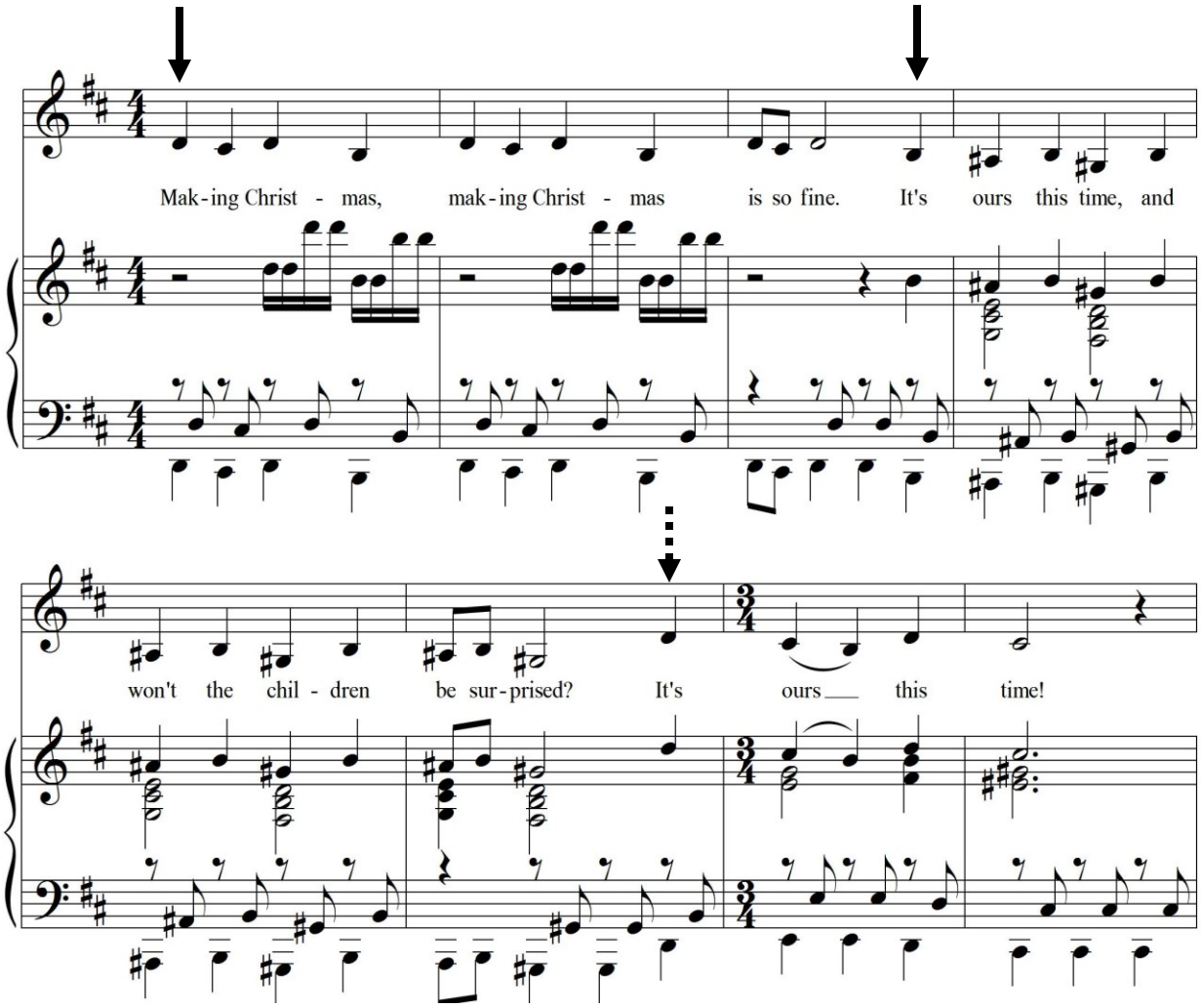
Making Christmas

Having received Jack's instructions and captured the leader of Christmas, the denizens of Halloween Town are in full force to realize Jack's vision and create their own interpretation of an alternate holiday. Singing their own demonic version of a labor song that is constructed prodigiously on the first four notes of the *Dies Irae*, the townspeople of Halloween Town revel in their toils as they bring their creations to fruition and call forth their own Judgment Day for their holiday neighbors.[22] No longer part of a fantasy, the townspeople are actively engaged in the building of a new reality; in so doing, they have finally encapsulated Christmas Town metric/hypermetric space—rather than simply dabbling in submetric references—while retaining the minor modality and harmonic qualities of the setting within the filmworld in which the activity is taking place.

First initiated by the Mayor, the opening verse is constructed of approximately eight measures in a 3+3+2 design (See Example 5.21). The first three-measure phrase consists of three statements of the four-note *Dies Irae* motive, with the final appearance significantly modifying the rhythms (diminution of the first two pitches, augmentation of the third) all over a static harmonic field. The second three-measure phrase elides with the end of the first, creating an apparent inversion of contour within the T_9 transposition of the motive in conjunction with a significantly more dissonant and active harmonic accompaniment through the alternation of fully-diminished and half-diminished seventh chords. As the townspeople discuss their current work and the eventual goal—"Making Christmas" and the seizing of the holiday to the eventual joy or horror of the children—the three-measure pattern and its immediate repetition establishes the first triple hypermetric structure within Halloween Town in the songs, confirming that the narrative metric space once associated with the distinct entity of Christmas has been commandeered within the new reality. The final two measures of the verse provide a temporary shift in the metric patterning, introducing a distinct triple meter that fills in the negative *Zeitnetz* space suggestive of the fantasy realm (identified in Figure 5.12). Upon declaring "It's ours this

[22] This marks the second appearance of the *Dies Irae*; its first use occurs at [0:30:34 – 0:30:38], as Sally holds a flower that turns into a Christmas tree that eventually bursts into flames. Its orchestration, set in the low brass, and its clear triple meter reflect a more traditional Romantic idiom, emulating its appearance in Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and serving as a moment of foreshadowing for the tragic events that will unfold during Jack's journey to Christmas Town.

time!", the townspeople have presented levels of reality (12:4:2:1) and fantasy (6:3:1) and truly made Jack's dream come true. Their celebration and labor continues, eventually leading to the Halloween home key of C minor and the appearance of the Pumpkin King.



Music Example 5.21. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Making Christmas" [0:41:43 – 0:41:55].

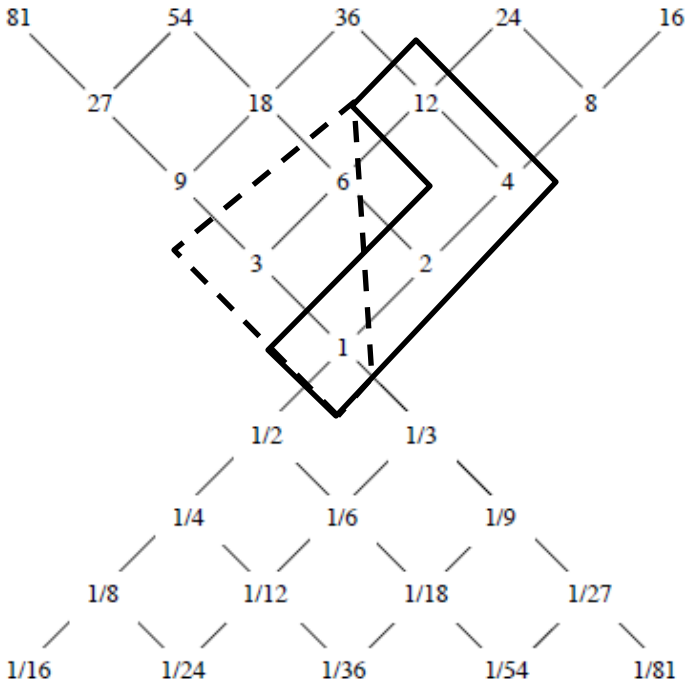


Figure 5.12. *Zeitnetz* comparison of the first three phrases in first verse of "Making Christmas."

Upon viewing his dreams coming to realization, Jack is overcome with joy (see Figure 5.22). With the townspeople now understanding both Jack's vision and his meaning of Christmas, the triple meter comes to the fore; moreover, there is a modified return of "Jack's Lament," bringing back the first fantasy-related material established in Halloween Town. The extension of phrase lengths, rather than the preservation of the original four-measure patterns, parallels the unification of the two holiday worlds. Upon arriving in the town square and overseeing the goings on for the first time, Jack is in complete awe at the attainment of his previously unidentified futility. The addition of one measure to the cadence prolongs the phrase to five measures while simultaneously creating a paradox: rather than emphasizing the merger of his dreams and reality, the (4+1) phrase design implies the false nature of the holiday through its imbalance. By the second phrase, however, Jack's illusion (or delusion) has supplanted any doubts within the filmworld or presentation to the filmgoer, as a symmetrical (3+3) six-measure phrase evenly balances the two worlds and substantiates the metric/hypermetric components of the first verse.

Here comes Jack!

I don't be - lieve what's

happ - 'ning to me. My hopes, my

dreams... my fan - ta - sies.

Music Example 5.22. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Making Christmas" [0:42:36 – 0:42:53].

A cross-cutting series between the two holiday worlds reveals the parallels and dichotomies in their preparatory methods for the celebration of Christmas. Utilizing primarily instrumentation and

chord qualities as surface features to express this separation between Halloween (low brass and organ with minor and diminished sonorities) and Christmas (sleighbells and high woodwinds set to predominantly major harmonies), the instrumental interlude continues to build in intensity throughout the montage. The sequence of interchanging symmetrical shots leads to the triumphant yet macabre march as the citizens of Halloween Town present their interpretation of presents and Christmas accoutrements to their "Christmas King." Mirroring this welling of unbridled joy in protagonist and cohorts is the semitonal modulation to D♭ minor with the return of the fragmented *Dies Irae* motive. This tonic is short lived, however, as the previously utilized transposition of descending minor third (to B♭ minor) and the preservation of this new pitch's centricity throughout the conclusion of the song confirms its status as concluding tonic. What was building excitement becomes an ironic tonal mockery as the hellish nightmare awaiting Christmas Town is preparing to rise from its (tonal) depths.

Oogie Boogie's Song

Santa Claus's unceremonious descent into the depths below the house of Lock, Shock, and Barrel leads him into the bizarre lair of the monstrous Oogie Boogie, a den where the darkest blacks are offset with the brightest neon colors within the filmworld. The imagery of dice, roulette wheels, and other gambling paraphernalia, paired with the ominous bass clarinet solo that leads to a brief and shrill clarinet duet, conjures images of a Southern riverboat gambler. This visual iconography pairs with the source of the musical influence: 1930s Betty Boop cartoons featuring singer Cab Calloway and, in particular, the songs "Minnie the Moocher," "St. James Infirmary," and "The Old Man of the Mountain." While incorporating relatively lighthearted dialogue to help offset the severity of the situation, it is the narrative tonal banter between the two forces and their respective worlds that helps convey the building dramatic tension.

"Oogie Boogie's Song" begins in B♭ minor, using a quick and characteristic **L** transformation, highly embellished with added dissonance, as the camera pans overhead of Santa Claus and his helpless position atop the large roulette wheel. The harmonic gesture paired with the imposing camera angle emphasizes not only the Halloween Town locale for the outsider but also provides an insidious and

mocking gesture at the futile nature of Santa's situation. Oogie Boogie's grand appearance—the first time his full body is shown to the filmgoer—is paired with another ominous Halloween Town harmonic gesture (**RP**) from the home key, drawing Santa Claus and the filmgoer deeper into the abyss through the transient modulation to D♭ minor. This transient modulation gives way to a full modulation to E♭ minor for Oogie's first verse, serving two critical harmonic functions: bringing Santa Claus across the Tonal Hinterlands and into discrete Halloween harmonic space, and reaffirming Oogie Boogie's harmonic realm by recalling the key of his original appearance as a shadow upon the moon in "This is Halloween." Santa Claus's dire state is only reiterated as Oogie Boogie continues to menace, establishing both the "Boogie Man" and the "Boogie Song" in C minor, achieved through the reverse modulatory transformation (**PR**) which opened the piece. The relationships between tonal centers are outlined below in Figure 5.13.

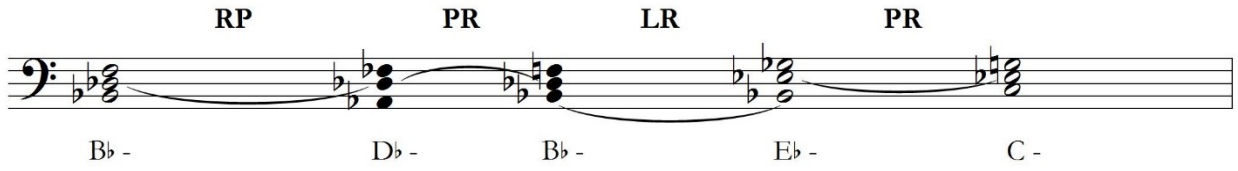


Figure 5.13. Tonal design of "Oogie Boogie's Song," first two verses.

Sensing the severity of the situation, Santa Claus begins pleading with his captor. Identical to the building excitement of Boogie's boys in the capturing process, Santa's first efforts at begging for his release incorporates a direct, upwards semitonal modulation between minor keys as it ascends to C♯ minor. Rather than articulating a positive sense of anxiousness, however, the meaning of this particular gesture becomes inverted within the foreigner, displaying a gradual growth of fear. In a display of superiority, Oogie assumes control of the scene and the music through a "grander" modulation in size—moving by whole tone to E♭ minor. Not only increasing in size, but perhaps more significantly, such a return to a definitive "Halloween Town" key only strengthens Oogie's hold over the scene and his victim, confirming that Santa Claus is firmly trapped in the underground casino in Halloween Town.

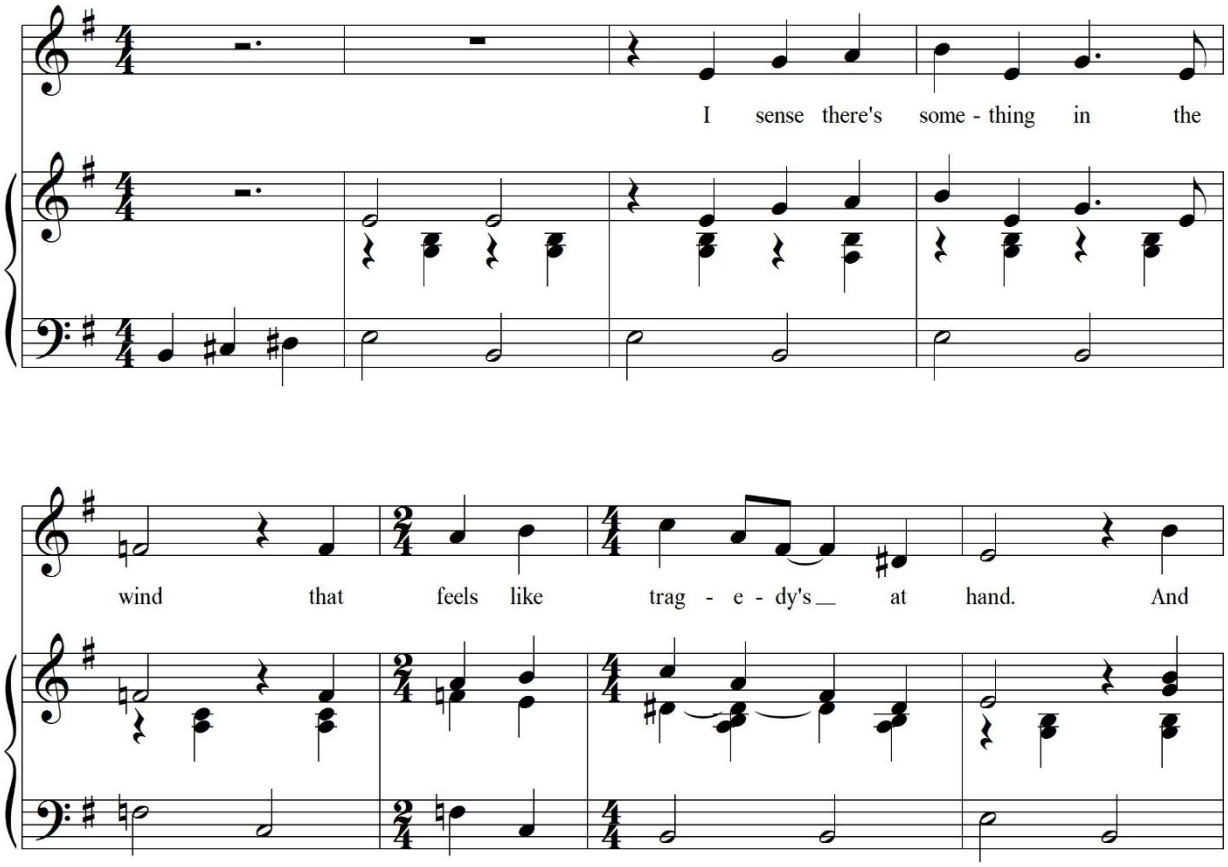
Quipping devilishly, Oogie Boogie sarcastically promises Santa Claus that he will do "the best he can" when interrogated what his forthcoming plans are for the holiday king. A zoom in and out of the wailing antagonist's mouth as he joyously begins his next verse parallels a downward semitonal shift to D minor.[23] Santa Claus, even more desperate and realizing that Oogie is plotting his demise and not simply his suffering, again assumes an upward semitonal modulation as he begs for his life; the key which he adopts (E♭ minor) in such a gesture, however, only confirms that his pleas are in vain. Similar to before, Oogie's response to Santa's entreaties reflect his superior position with an ascending modulation by a whole step, but this moment is very fleeting; it quickly gives way back to E♭ minor and cadences in the tonal realm of Halloween, ensuring that Santa's chances of escape are nil. The villain's final words ("You ain't goin' nowhere!") only punctuate the tonal and formal closure further, effectively closing the passage of the Tonal Hinterlands as the gangster and his henchmen celebrate with maniacal laughter.

Sally's Song

Watching her love take off to the sky and towards his foreseen doom, Sally is left to mourn alone as she is the only one who has seen the premonition of the ill-fated venture. Still remaining in Halloween Town, her soliloquy is firmly entrenched in duple metric groupings and divisions; her thoughts focused on Jack and his efforts in Christmas Town, however, are implied through the use of the tonal center of E minor (see Example 5.23). Additionally, the frequent use of ♭II, especially within a i → ♭II progression (**LRL**) recalls both "Jack's Lament" and the "Town Meeting Song," reemphasizing her connection to Jack as well as underscoring the notion of "him" as the missing piece within her life. A consistently recurring figure within the melody is a three-beat ascending anacrusis, similar in contour

[23] A noticeable difference between the "preserved" filmworld within the medium, and the extended narrative filmworld outside of what is presented to the filmgoer must be identified. This modulation is very abrupt and direct, greatly smoothed over by the silence which allows the sardonic dialogue to take the forefront; both the commercial soundtrack and song book, however, provide a bridge in the key of A minor, a tritone away from the previous key (and creating a perfect fifth distance to D minor, as opposed to the descending semitone that results in the filmworld). Because of the interference created by this interceding material and its corresponding effect to a tonal interpretation, a similar break in analysis is afforded in this reading.

to the opening motive of "Jack's Lament" but elongated to disrupt the metric stress, creating a typical ten-beat phrase structure.



Music Example 5.23. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Sally's Song" [0:53:24 – 0:53:39].

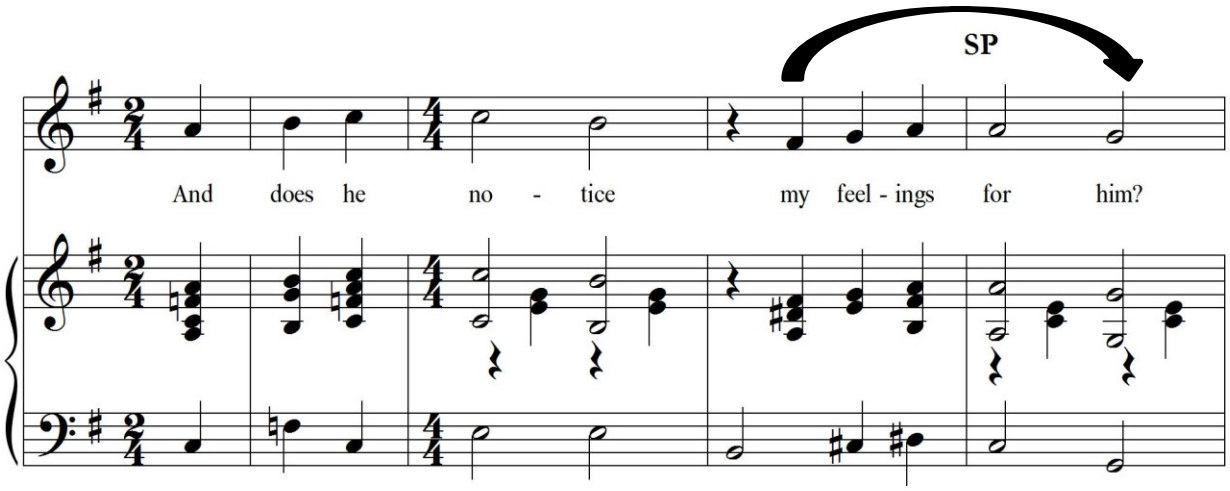
It is at this point that a primary associative theme within the film finally achieves narrative meaning through the text. The opening musical phrase ("I sense there's something in the wind") has recurred multiple times throughout the work in the underscore, even appearing as the opening melodic line of the film proper. The initial narrative connotation would suggest that it would be "Sally's theme" or a love theme, but the visual pairings with the aural cues suggest that the associative meaning is, in fact, a foreshadowing cue. The meaning derived from the literal words of the lyrics: "something in the wind," and the theme's recurrence in the diegesis is prophetic. Strengthening the separation of the theme from character association is the origins of Sally within the history of the film. Originally, Sally

was not a part of the narrative in Burton's poem or the first scripts, but later in the process after many of the original songs had been written. The character of Sally was a late addition from script writer Caroline Thompson after approximately eighty percent of the songs had already been written and storyboarding had already begun.[24]

A noticeable deviation from this from this basic pattern involves a truncation of the phrase, creating a seven-beat structure and its immediate repetition by omitting the final sustained three beats and supplanting them with the ascending three-note motive. These asymmetrical beat patterns of the phrases, either (3+4+3) or (3+4), insinuate the two worlds tugging at Sally's love, with the initial three-beat anacrusis using the contour of Jack's motive to call to him from Christmas Town, a four-beat descending (sighing) figure from Sally residing in Halloween Town, and a potential three-beat moment of repose.

The second progression of B+ → C+ within the contracted phrase matches the **SP** pattern previously established; both progressions, however, are modified through the suspension in the voice and accompanying saxophone (see Example 5.24). To emphasize further the sense of longing in conjunction with the suspensions, the roles of harmonic function are greatly modified. Rather than undulating around the central tonic pitch, the progression (♭II → i → V → VI) concludes deceptively, seeking further resolution. This finality is achieved as Sally concludes that she alone cannot provide Jack the happiness that he desires, and the key of E minor—the token of Christmas that could not be eliminated throughout her song—prevails in its confirmation.

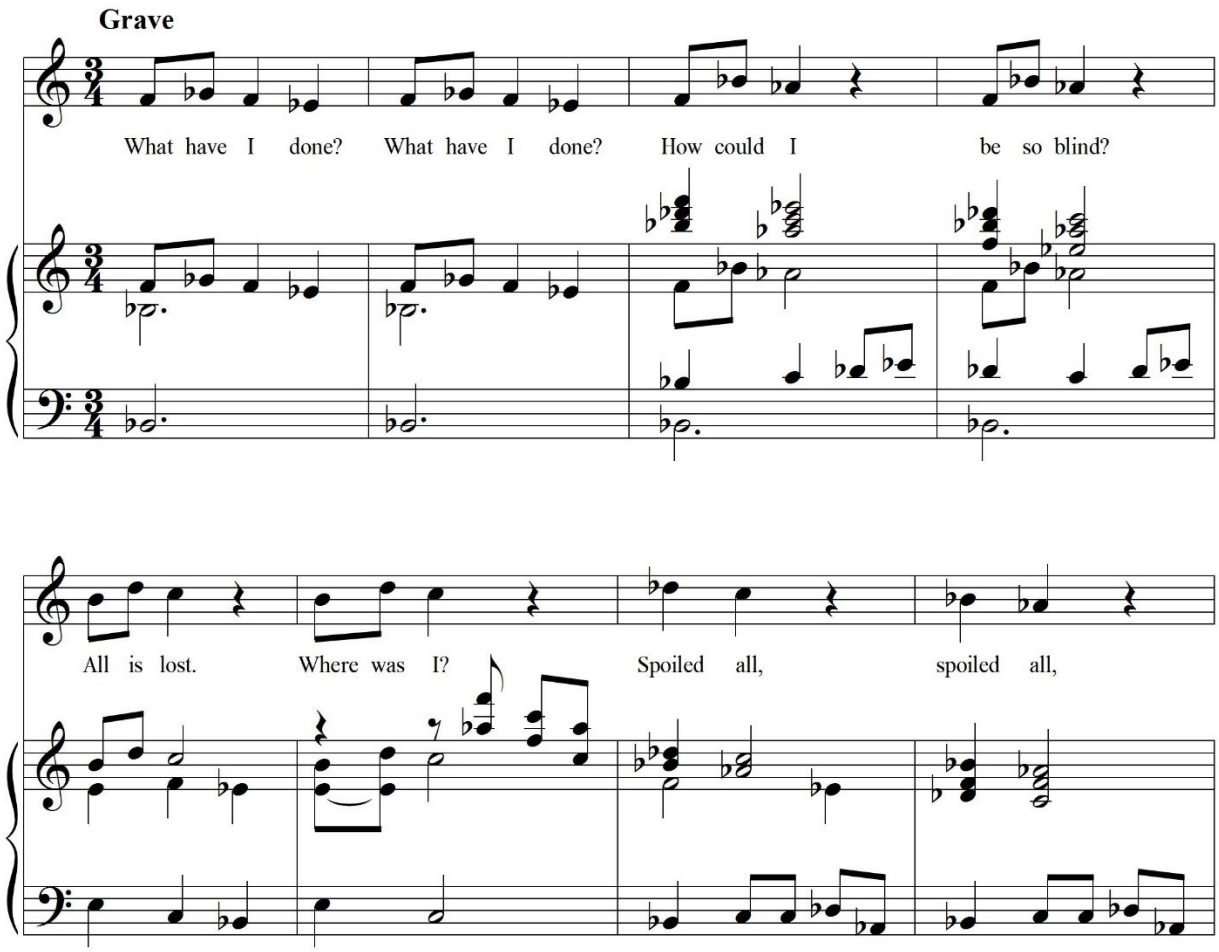
[24] See Frank Thompson, *Tim Burton's* The Nightmare Before Christmas*: The Film, the Art, the Vision* (New York: Hyperion, 1993), 89. Thompson summarizes, "(Sally's) song was written rather late in the composing process, after Caroline Thompson had been brought in to write the script. 'Sally was a character that Danny took my lead on rather than the other way around,' Thompson points out."



Music Example 5.24. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Sally's Song" [0:53:55 – 0:54:03].

Poor Jack

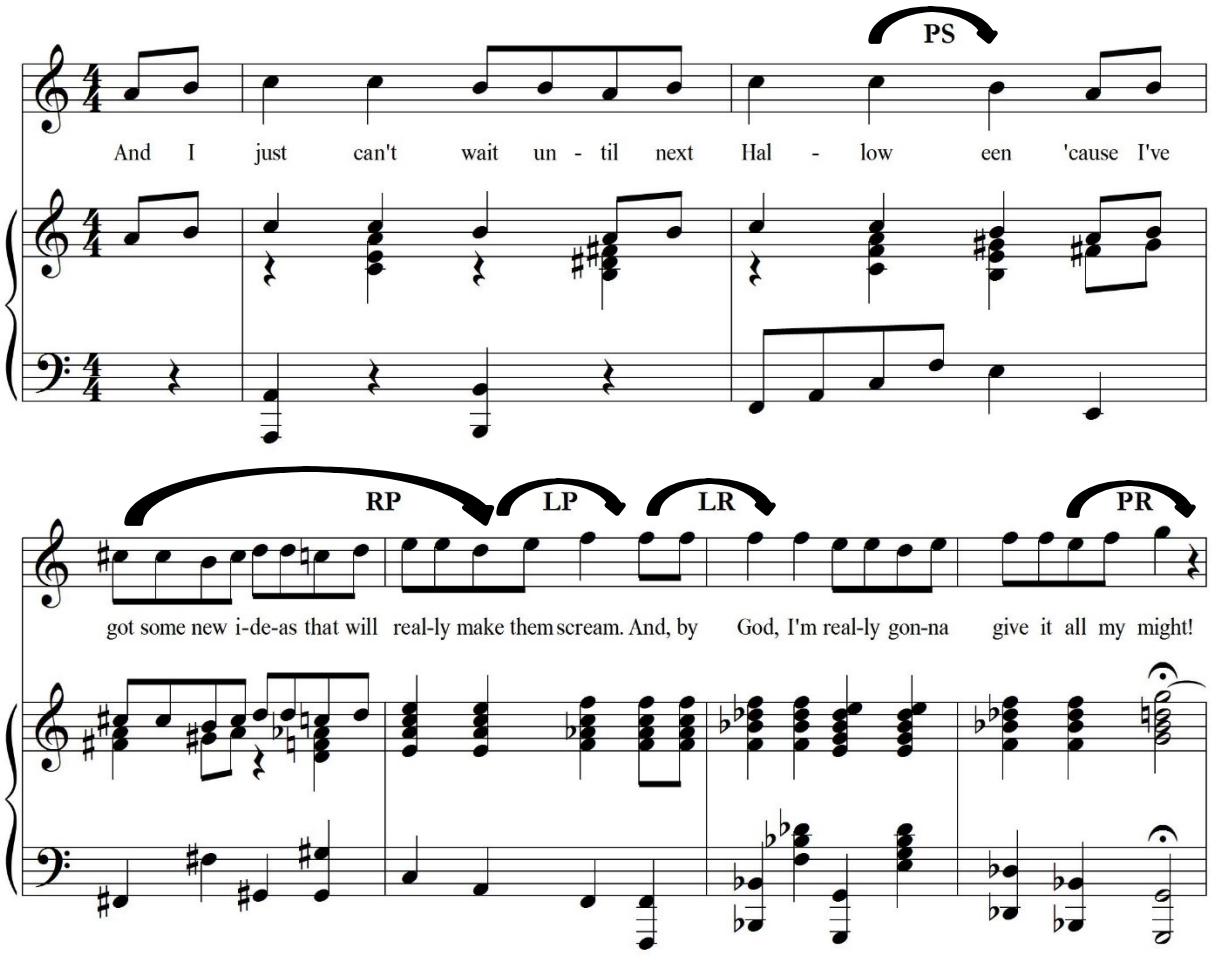
Having been unceremoniously struck down from the sky during his joyride, Jack is surrounded by the smoldering remains of his vision in the graveyard of Christmas Town. Held delicately in the arms of an angel in a pose replicating the *Pietà*, Jack can only question where his wild adventure went wrong and see his pursuits as utter failure (see Example 5.25). Still trapped in the physical realm of the fantastic, the song begins in a slow triple meter in B♭ minor as it hearkens back to the final preparations of Jack's grand plan in "Making Christmas," though now subverting its once joyful tone in intimating a funeral march. Upon realizing the degree of devastation surrounding him and, in so doing, appreciating the locale of his failure, the harmony moves temporarily to E-, acknowledging Christmas fleetingly before quickly shifting back to B♭-.The opening two measures begins with an inversion of the four-note figure which marked Jack's foray into Christmas Town and jubilant ride through the midnight sky; the changes in tempo, register, and contour all characterize the dramatic narratological inversion the scene brings before the filmgoer.



Music Example 5.25. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Poor Jack" [1:02:17 – 1:02:44].

As Jack postulates the only way to save face following his abject fiasco is to disappear from the world(s) entirely, a change to simple quadruple meter paired with an **LP** transformation pulls him closer to his homeland. Upon declaring and rediscovering himself as the Pumpkin King, Jack revives his love for his own holiday and its celebratory elements (see Example 5.26). What started as a dirge closes as a triumphant yet slow military march announcing the return of the monarch, replete with hallmark Halloween-centric triadic motion. A lone fantasy gesture (**PS**) is situated ironically on the word "Halloween," implying that Jack's new-found enthusiasm to return to his roots is just as strong as his motivation to break free from them. Though ending in the key of G minor and striking a balance between his fantasy and reality, the series of unresolved fully-diminished seventh chords remind Jack

and the filmgoer that there is still work to be done—Santa Claus must be rescued, and the damage to both holiday worlds but be rectified.

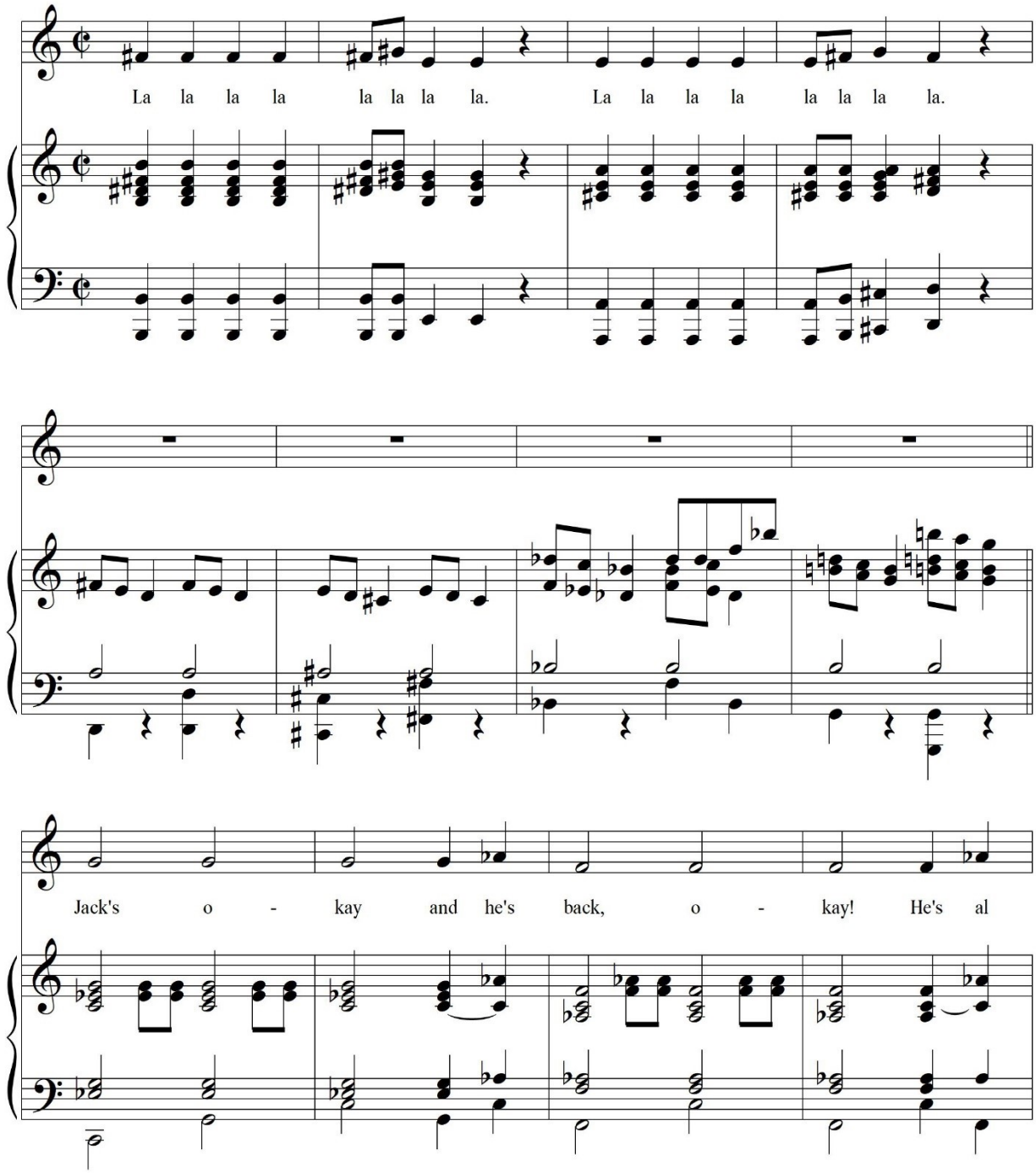


Music Example 5.26. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Poor Jack" [1:04:20 – 1:04:32].

Finale/Reprise

The finale of the film recalls excerpts from three previous songs: "This is Halloween," "What's This?", and "Sally's Song." The townspeople celebrate the surprise arrival of their leader once feared dead—paired with the unusual tonic/modality combination of B major. An **L** transformation from F♯+ → A♯- quickly prepares for a return of tonal normalcy for their world: C minor (see Example 5.27). The celebration continues with an augmented first verse of "This is Halloween," following an identical progression from the opening of the film. The triumphant announcement of the return of their leader

and his good health, despite observing his apparent demise, suggests the use of B major at the beginning of the celebration is but a momentary anomaly, with the return of C minor and the original theme and harmonic progression a simultaneous return of normalcy for their world and way of living.



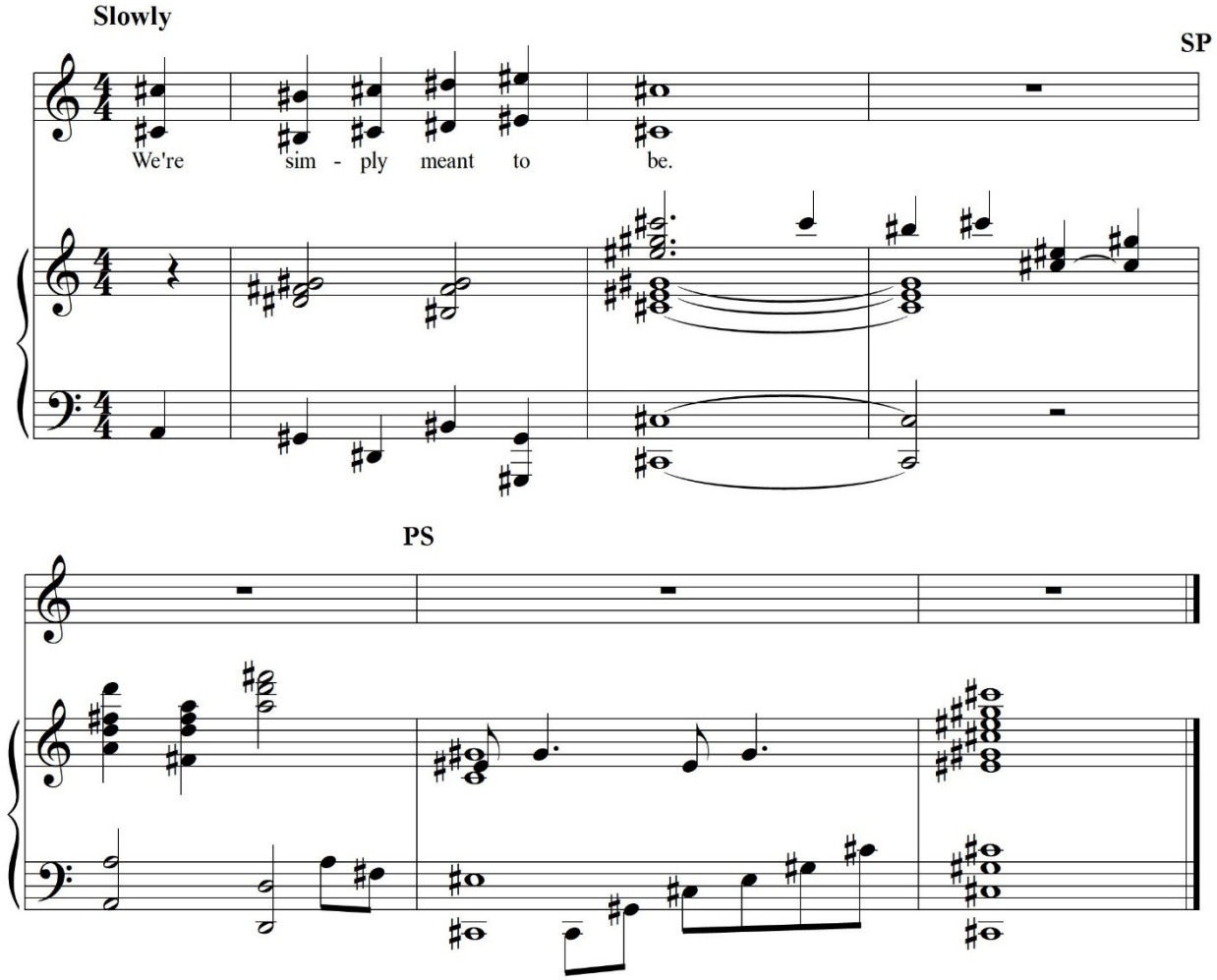
Music Example 5.27. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Finale/Reprise" [1:08:44 – 1:08:58].

As Jack continues to receive the appreciation of the people of Halloween Town with a newfound vigor and zeal for his job as the king of all things macabre, he notices Santa Claus flying overhead across the full moon. After the two call out to each other and exchange well wishes regarding their respective holidays, Santa Claus gives Jack one final present: snow in Halloween Town. The townspeople examine the falling crystals in bewilderment, mirroring Jack's initial arrival in Christmas Town. Reflected in their bafflement is a return to B major as the music recalls "What's This?" and the townspeople begin to make the connection between the falling white powder and Christmas. The return to B major, coinciding with the echoes of Jack's original venture to Christmas town, creates an aural inversional symmetry between the protagonist and his Halloween kin: the oscillating gesture which begins Jack's fantastic adventure of descending-ascending semitone (C+ → B+ → C+) has been inverted to ascending-descending on a larger scale with respect to tonal centers, with a critical adjustment to the middle region (B+ → C- → B+). The necessity arises from the physical location, as the finale takes place in Halloween Town and preserves its tonal identity of C minor.[25]

While the townsfolk continue celebrating their makeshift Christmas during their first true winter, Jack wanders off and finds Sally atop the snow covered Spiral Hill, the location of his lament. As Jack embraces the fulfillment within his life and approaches his friend to discuss his feelings for her and their future, the music modulates to C♯ minor for the final section of the finale. As Jack begins to sing to Sally, the mode switches to major, confirming both the benevolent atmosphere as well as the infusion of Christmas spirit through tonic quality within the world of Halloween Town. The change of mode prevails throughout the reprisal, preserving major chords through almost the entirety of their duet. Accepting that their fate has been predetermined by the stars, the two grasp hands and embrace at the final PAC. A final **SP → PS** gesture, identified in Example 5.28, embellishes the harmonic closure and emphasizes Jack's mental journey as well as the essence of Christmas enveloping

[25] The symmetry is not only aural but also visual, especially as it relates to the appearance of the full moon. The first figure to appear on the moon was the shadow of Oogie Boogie during "This is Halloween," placing the antagonist in an unidentified location of filmic space and projected onto the Halloween Town landscape. During the finale, Santa Claus has supplanted the now-defeated adversary, and appears as a physical body before the moon in full color.

the scene. Echoes of the motive from "What's This?" serve as a faint reminder of a "Christmas past" as Jack literally and figuratively embraces his future with Sally.



Music Example 5.28. Transcription of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, "Finale/Reprise" [1:10:54 – 1:11:18].

The relationships of tonal centers within the finale reveal the correlation of the various characters and their worlds with respect to harmonic Christmas Town space, more specifically, its tonal center. By literally bringing not just a token of the holiday season but the essence of the holiday spirit symbolized through the snowfall, Santa Claus has allowed Christmas to permeate "physical" Halloween Town space, simultaneously allowing major tonality to prevail in Halloween Town for the first and only time within the songs. Because C major remains entrenched within Christmas Town, it does not pass between the worlds and remains outside the realm, just as the celebration for Jack's

return and the preservation of the Halloween's order in the reprise of "This is Halloween" remains in C minor. When the denizens of Halloween Town receive their "gift" and are given one day of Christmas, it is a temporary and fleeting glimpse of a world outside their own. Because their experience is ultimately synthetic and will dissipate after the holiday season, it cannot achieve the full potential of its counterpart and resides tonally below its source.

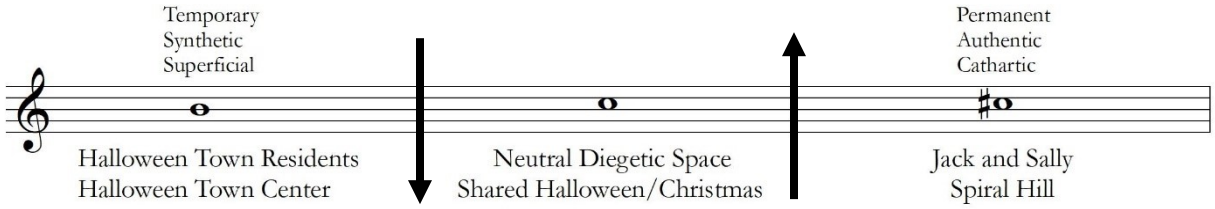


Figure 5.14. Narrative relationship of tonal centers in "Finale/Reprise."

For Jack, however, he has achieved his dream and fulfilled the longing he has desired. Moreover, the experience has rekindled his fondness for his natural position within Halloween Town and has helped him discover a true love in the lone individual who cares most for his well-being. The epiphany and rapture is transpiring at Spiral Hill, outside of the town square and away from the false holiday, just outside the woods which lead to the Hinterlands. The experience is authentic, enlightening, and transcendent, lifting Jack (and the tonal center) above the tonic of his fantasy; he has not simply lived his dream, but instead surpassed and now looks forward to the future.

CONCLUSION

The original impetus for this study stems from two paths: my deep personal interests in both the art of film music and the specific composer, and the aspiration to bring more of Elfman's contributions into academic discourse. Initial research on the subject of Elfman's film music brought light upon the recurrence of the term "transformation" as a concept related to his thematic mutations, yet the application of a formal analytical study in any capacity remained beyond the spectrum of both academia and commercial summaries. While theme always seemed to capture the initial focal point, the notion would quickly give way to the topic of orchestration; the idea of capturing "the quintessential Elfman sound" relied on the immediately identifiable surface feature of timbre, with internal musical processes serving as nothing more than the forbidden fruit that would remain untouched. Discussions would dabble in harmony or melody, often identifying the distinctness in comparison to contemporaries—or, perhaps further isolating the composer, describing his musical processes as "odd" or "quirky"—but seldom explore precisely *what* about said harmony or melody added to the effect. Rhythm and meter similarly remained on the outside, usually presented from the biographical perspective of his rock band experience or excursion to Africa. The "Elfman sound" remained nothing more than a literal sound defined by the instruments which created the noises, and the underlying musical processes remained the silent partners of the collaboration.

Adding to the concept of the "Elfman sound" is the pairing of composer with director, a union noted for its distinct visual, aural, and narrative patterns which run through multiple films. The working symbiosis between Elfman and Burton and the influence wielded upon each other necessitates a model which permits a concept of simultaneous filmic individuality and continuity, a metaphorical umbrella in which individual film narratives maintain their independence yet have the capacity to share threads of shared elements in their diegetic components. The traditional notion of "film-as-communicator," while ideal for the individual film itself, lacks the strength and merit of a shared space through which multiple narratives could be linked. By utilizing Daniel Frampton's concept of the "filmworld" and granting a sense of embodiment in conjunction with autonomy, the

individual film not only retains its independence but also develops the concept of a larger space beyond the filmgoer. It is in this superior diegetic realm where a "Burtonian filmworld," a narrative domain which encapsulates the potential for interrelated aspects of multiple narratives, exists. Elfman's music, as a component of this filmworld and no longer bound by the demands of a diegetic/nondiegetic definition, becomes an equal contributor in the filmind's projection to the filmgoer. If Elfman's music is truly a constituent of this Burtonian filmworld, its potential to be intimately linked within and across films from a narrative perspective, rather than simply timbral, becomes a strong plausibility.

The thematic analyses of Janet Halfyard and harmonic analyses of Frank Lehman and Matthew Bribitzer-Stull served as an initial foray into the potential of applying transformational methodology into Elfman's music and discerning links with contemporary film scoring techniques as well as individualistic tendencies. Building from these first inquiries and expanding the concept of transformation to include processes which involve the permutation of melodic, harmonic, and/or rhythmic/metric elements, the primary goal of this study was to provide a new definition of the "Elfman sound" through explicitly inherent musical properties devoid of the overwhelming tendencies to embrace timbre as the quintessential feature.

While the preliminary studies often paralleled the "surface level" features of the music, particularly with respect to thematic and harmonic associativity, patterns of music processes and narrative connotations could nevertheless be identified within and across multiple films between the Burton/Elfman corpus which appear unique to the pair's "independent filmworld." In addition to the distinct fingerprint in comparison to popular film, Elfman's scoring technique and expression of narrative through melody, harmony, and/or rhythm and meter within Burton films uses procedures independent of his other film scores outside this pairing, revealing film music at a level on par with the narrative *in totum* rather than as a subordinate. The analysis of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* reveals the prospective of long-term transformational relationships of theme, harmony, and meter not only independently, but also interconnected—from a musical and a musico-narrative viewpoint. Elfman's work, although contained within a relative anomaly of the film and film scoring process, creates a

particular sound that permeates the narrative structure, utilizing transformational techniques developed before and incorporated after this Burtonian passion project.

Limits of Dissertation

By focusing on the concept of a "Burtonian filmworld" that could span across multiple movies and narratives as well as Elfman's explicit function in articulating these qualities of a Burtonian narrative, a preference is given towards films which either contain written contributions by Burton himself or permit the director artistic freedom to manipulate the original source material and create an identifiable diegetic contribution. The intentional avoidance of instrumentation as a critical element of establishing a Burtonian filmworld also participates in this identification of examples. In so doing, however, the selection process for excerpts results in an inherent bias that greatly imbalances the representation across the entire span of the working relationship as well as omitting some films entirely.

A film such as *Big Fish*, which contains deep personal connections to the director and reflects many typical qualities of the auteur, is intentionally avoided due to the strong adherence to the original source material, thus making Burton's narrative more of a replication rather than a unique interpretation. Similarly, *Dark Shadows* and *Big Eyes* rely greatly on sources exterior to the concept of a Burtonian filmworld; despite strong visual elements that mirror Burton's aesthetics, the narrative remains more entwined with original source material than infused with Burton's personal touch. Both *Mars Attacks!* and *Planet of the Apes* are largely driven by instrumentation rather than thematic, harmonic, or rhythmic/metric design, using timbral means to provide sonic markers for characters and their relationships to diegesis, and both serve as homages to stylized periods in film history. While it seems contradictory that *Batman* would be utilized so extensively due to its wealth of original source material, Burton's film provides such extensive modifications from these primary foundations that a new, more "Burton-based" interpretation of the character is presented to the filmgoer. By creating the character of Jack Napier and formulating his persona not only as the eventual Joker but also as the murderer of Bruce Wayne's parents, the film's (Burton's) narrative not only revises both backstories for the protagonist and antagonist but also entirely changes Batman's *raison d'être*, adding a layer of

personal redemption and revenge related to his parents' slaying that is noticeably absent from the comics.

An effort to identify commonly recurring compositional traits with one specific director also places a stronger emphasis on earlier works within Elfman's oeuvre, specifically his first six films with Tim Burton as director or primary collaborator, as is the case with *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. This specialized window provides not only a glimpse into the early period of the Burtonian filmworld and the opportunity to trace its organic growth and evolution prior to a falling out between the director and composer, but also the most consistent time frame in which Elfman's career was predominated in scoring Burton's films. As his career has continued to progress and his work more widely acclaimed and accepted, Elfman has become considerably more diverse in his contributions to film and television music and has written for numerous styles and genres that greatly exceed the intended narrative portal for analysis. Just as directors have sought the so-called "Elfman sound" broadly defined through approximately his first decade of work, his distinct compositional methods have developed identifiable qualities in areas beyond instrumentation, "quirkiness," and the Burtonian/gothic aesthetic, especially in contemporary superhero films. Melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic/metric patterns within more recent works are undoubtedly still viable and reveal a more evolved compositional style refined through additional years of experience and a greater array of genres, while simultaneously suffering from influence from a significantly increased workload and decreased correlation as "composer-for" Tim Burton. This has been most readily seen in Burton's 2016 film *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, where Elfman was not attached to the project. Though unconfirmed, it is widely theorized that the primary reason is related to the composer's unavailability due to scheduling demands for other films and compositions for the concert hall.

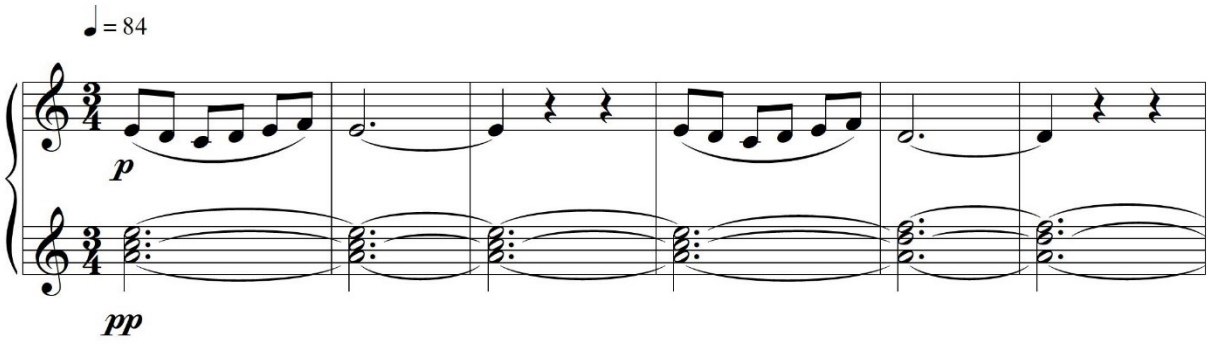
Potential for future research

One of the first challenges of this study was elevating the position of music within filmic analytical discourse to a level where it was not subjugated by the images on the screen but treated with equality for all events of the filmic experience. Building from the work of Claudia Gorbman, narrative serves

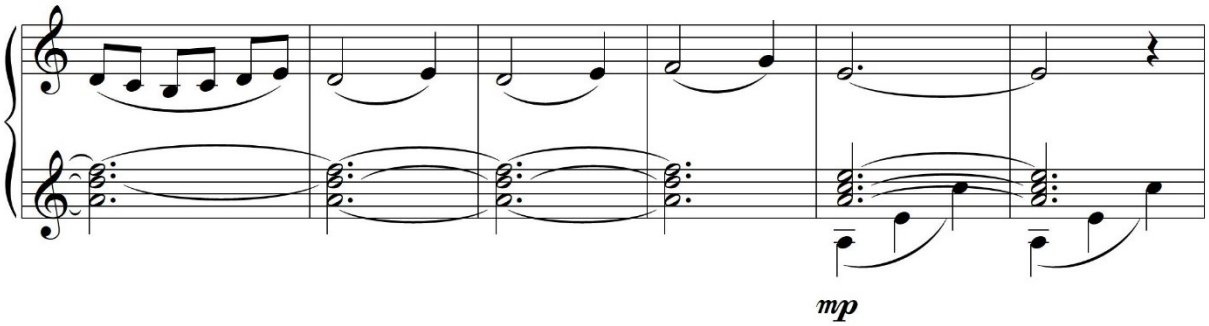
as a potential conduit for such elevation of music, but the need to identify the location of music's source within the diegesis relegates the score to secondary status, placing primacy on the viewer and their ability to establish spatial orientation with the unfolding visual. David Neumeyer's approach raises music to the level of the soundtrack, but cannot let it surpass vococentricity; the supremacy of the human voice restricts music to subservient status once more. By invoking Daniel Frampton's notion of the "filmworld," however, and establishing the film as an autonomous unit, one which is not simply a sender of a message to a receiver (the filmgoer), all elements of the film can be interpreted on a uniform level. Additionally, the issues of terminology concerning the relationship of music and its location to narrative space becomes arbitrary, relevant only if necessary to the intent of the analysis. *All* film music is contained within the filmworld because it originates within the film itself, whether or not the characters are aware of its presence.

The pairings of individual directors with certain composers is certainly not a novel concept, and the idea of filmic narratives stretching beyond individual pictures into sequels (or further) is likewise commonplace. By further invoking the idea of the filmworld and linking its model with the identifiable, recurring features of such directors, the notion of a narrative space which extends through multiple films and *across* narratives may also be conceived, encapsulating the narratological tendencies of setting, plot, character, and other common directorial propensities. For directors more intimately involved in the creation and writing process (or, more specifically, more wholly entrenched in the formulation of the narrative), the stronger the plausibility of a unique, multi-picture filmworld exists beyond the realms of sequels or common titles. Tendencies of both director and composer may be interlinked across narratives, confirming a symbiosis of visual and aural narrativity within the autonomous film. Such working collaborations of director and composer paired within a similar genre or narrative vein include Hayao Miyazaki and Joe Hisaishi and the animated films of Studio Ghibli, Hans Emmerich and Harald Kloser in contemporary apocalyptic films, M. Night Shyamalan and James Newton Howard in supernatural or psychological horror/thriller, and Ishirō Honda and Akira Ifukube in Japanese kaiju and tokusatsu films of the 1950s-1970s.

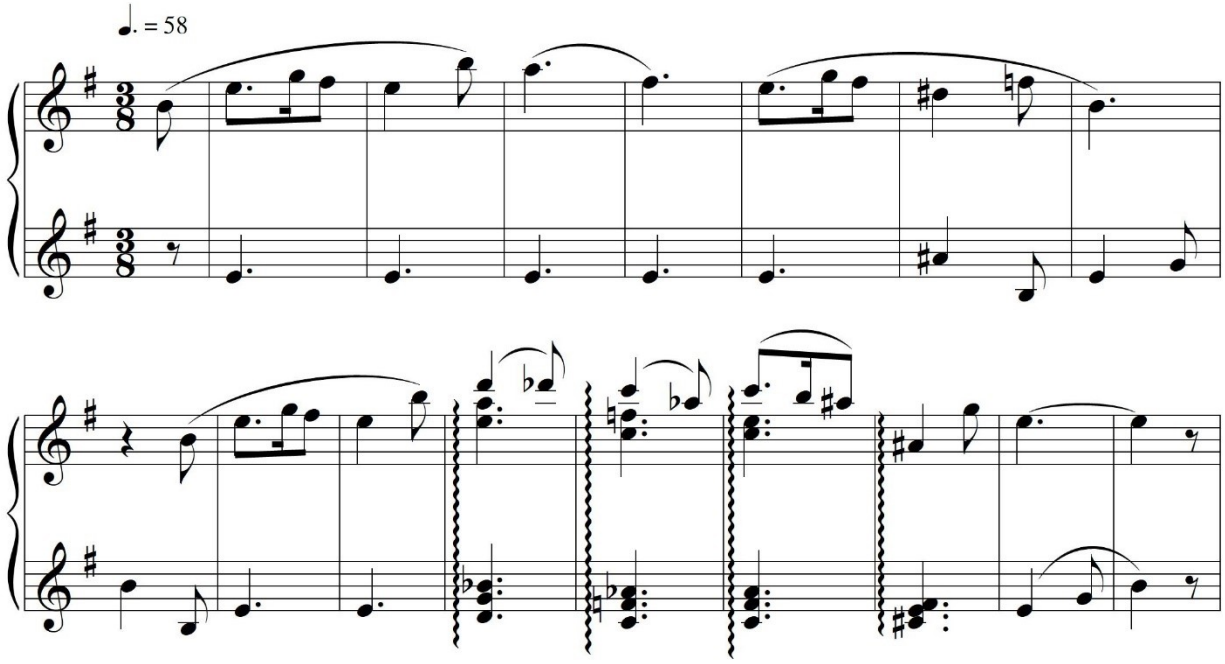
The prospects of metric organization and the relationship of reality and fantasy, especially with respect to the filmgoer, is another avenue which may yield insight. The use of a lullaby to welcome the filmgoer to a fairy tale world has reappeared in other works. Guillermo del Toro's 2006 dark fantasy *Pan's Labyrinth* combines perceived elements of the real world and fantastic as a young girl (Ofelia) faces three trials as she seeks protection for herself and her infant brother from her sadistic father Captain Vidal (see Example 6.1). Ofelia, however, is the mortal incarnation of Princess Moanna, daughter of the king of the Underworld, and Ofelia's death in the physical ("real") world allows Princess Moanna to return to her rightful home and kingdom. The film presents a moment within the fairy tale of Princess Moanna, where she is represented to the filmgoer in her mortal form, facing her trials and preparing for her return at the close of the story. The musical representation of this fairy tale is the "fantastic physical" metric grouping structure, identical to *Edward Scissorhands*, with emphasis on triple grouping structures, and the reality that has been presented to the filmgoer is retroactively redefined as instead a nonexistent fantasy contained within the fairy tale. A use of triple divisions—within a duple grouping structure—can be seen in the principle theme to the *Harry Potter* films, where the engagement of a different (submetric) triple layer is used to introduce the filmgoer and the characters to a separate magical world (see Example 6.2). Unlike the singular fantastic realm in *Pan's Labyrinth*, the magical realm in *Harry Potter* begins with observations of enchantment before transitioning into duality that pervades the eight-film series.



Music Example 6.1a. Javier Navarrete, *Pan's Labyrinth*, "A Long, Long Time Ago," mm. 1-12.



Music Example 6.1a, continued.



Music Example 6.1b. John Williams, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, "Hedwig's Theme," mm. 1-12.

Concluding remarks

As eloquently stated by Scott Murphy concerning the development of his TTPC methodology, "I recommend against making too much—if also, too little—of these findings."[1] The primary goal of this study is to challenge the prevailing current of Elfman discourse: that orchestration and timbre is the definitive means of articulating his style. The tools and models presented within are utilized to

[1] Scott Murphy, "Transformational Theory and the Analysis of Film Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford, 2014), 488.

explore but one composer and director pairing within a thirty year span during contemporary, popular American cinema—a considerably small window in the film music spectrum, let alone the output of both individuals within their respective careers. Nevertheless, to disregard the consistent recurrence of distinct patterns in favor of the prevailing trends would only stagnate potential scholastic growth. Just as the composer remained on the outside of the "Hollywood elite" for several years before slowly gaining acceptance by the end of the 1990s, so too could and should the of his music acquire traction in a greater forum than its previous usage. Similarly, film music as a genre may gain more cogency through the elevation of its status from its constant subsidiary role to collaborator with narrative articulation. This study, however, is but one small step in these directions, and will hopefully foster further excursions into independent and interrelated filmworlds.

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