Test Bank for Hearing the Movies - Music and Sound in Film History 2nd Buhler

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Exercises and Assignments

For *Hearing the Movies*, 2nd Edition
(by James Buhler)

This is a set of exercises and assignments, most of which can be used with appropriate modification at any point during the semester. At the end of the document are several suggestions from the authors for activities supporting Chapter 4.

Masking Exercise

The masking exercise is covered in the text (p. 29). It is very simple to set up and it scales from small classes to large. You can run masking exercises on pretty much any example, meaning that you can have clips serve double duty. In my large classes, I divide the group into thirds, assigning one section to concentrate on dialogue, another on sound effects, and the third to music. I then have them describe either what they hear if masking the visuals or what they think they will hear if masking the audio. You can run this exercise in a variety of ways: you can do one first and then the other; or just one of them. I usually have them discuss what they have heard or think they should hear after each play. I will usually play it for them two or three times depending on how thorough the discussion is after the second play through. I then play the clip unmasked and we discuss what surprised them about their descriptions. Inevitably there will be two sorts of major errors: they will list things that don't actually sound; or not list things that do sound. In addition, they may have noticed something and not described it accurately. Masking exercises can be done in conjunction with other exercises, and I will often use them through the first few weeks of the semester as part of showing clips for other purposes.

Commutation Test

The commutation test is also covered in the text (p. 30). Students love this exercise, and it rarely fails to generate lively discussion. Commutation tests generally take some planning, though it can vary from elaborate to very rudimentary. I have one commutation test that is very elaborate indeed: I rebuilt the sound track for the long tracking segment at the end of the Battle of Agincourt from Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V*. For Patrick Doyle's score, I substituted an excerpt from Arnold Schoenberg's "Vergangenes" from his *Five Pieces for Orchestra*. I also added sound effects to the sequence and I play it without telling students that I have made a substitution. We then discuss my version as though it were the original. After having developed a tentative interpretation, I then play the original for the students, telling them simply I will play it again. The difference between the two is remarkable, affecting pacing and even the dominant colors that students will see in the image.

If you have the expertise to pull something like the above example together, I highly recommend it, but a simpler commutation test is almost equally as impressive to students.

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Sample Quiz Questions

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This is a bank of questions that culled from quizzes administered while teaching the first edition. Here the short answer questions have been cued to the second edition. A typical quiz, which usually takes between 15-30 minutes, has two parts:

- Either a set of terms to define, or some short answer questions, or a combination of both;
- A scene description for a short clip.

A list of terms by chapter is available on both the Ancillary Resource Center (www.oup-arc.com/buhlerneumeyer, for instructors) and the Companion Website (www.oup.com/us/buhlerneumeyer, for students). The short answer questions here have been drawn from the list of study questions, sometimes in slightly modified form, from the file "Study Questions" on the Ancillary Resource Center. Finally, we have also provided a set of examples of writing prompts for scene descriptions.

Short Answers

Chapter 3

Explain the following two oppositions with respect to sound and music and how they differ from one another: onscreen/offscreen and diegetic/nondiegetic.

Answer the following questions about the acousmêtre:

A. What distinguishes the acousmêtre from a simple offscreen voice?
B. What sorts of characters are typically represented as acousmêtres?

Describe the process of deacousmatization and how it relates to the figure of the acousmêtre.

Briefly explain the concept of an audio dissolve. Name at least one example of audio dissolve that we discussed in class.

Chapter 4

Briefly describe a typical nickelodeon program around 1910. In particular what were some of the ways music was used in these shows?

The three modes of musical accompaniment in the silent era were improvisation, compilation and original score. Describe each and briefly explain how they differed

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Study Questions by Chapter

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These are study questions to help students review terms and concepts by chapter. There are also comprehensive questions for the textbook as a whole at the end of the document. These questions are also adaptable to be used as short answer questions for quizzes and exams.

Chapter 1

- Why is filmmaking more concerned with the narrative clarity of the sound track than with its fidelity?
  - HtM, 9-12
- What are the three sound track components? Which of these is typically given precedence? Why is it granted this precedence?
  - HtM, 9-12
- What are the primary narrative functions of speech?
  - HtM, 12-14
- What are the primary narrative functions of sound effects?
  - HtM, 14-16
- What are the primary narrative functions of music?
  - HtM, 16-18
- Briefly explain the principal differences between a musical topic and a leitmotif.
  - HtM, 16-17, 122-24
- Why is the sound track of *Sleepless in Seattle* composed?
  - HtM, 19-24
- Briefly explain what a masking exercise is and why it is an important technique for sound track analysis.
  - HtM, 29-30
- Briefly explain what a commutation test is and why it is an important technique for sound track analysis.
  - HtM, 30-33

Chapter 2

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- Explain why musical terminology can be useful in describing a film sound track.
    - HtM, 34-35

- Be prepared to define tempo, accelerando, ritardando, rhythm, meter, volume, dynamics, crescendo, decrescendo, diminuendo, timbre, tessitura, pitch, consonance, and dissonance
    - HtM, 36-47

- Define distortion. Explain how it can be used productively on a sound track.
    - FtM, 41-42

- What are the five kinds of texture outlined in the text? Which texture typically prevails on the sound track?
    - HtM, 47-52

- How does texture relate to foreground/background functions?
    - HtM, 52-54

Chapter 3

- How does the pair diegetic/nondiegetic relate to foreground/background?
    - HtM, 56-58

- How does the pair diegetic/nondiegetic relate to onscreen/offscreen?
    - HtM, 57-64

- How does the ambiguity of diegetic/nondiegetic sound and music affect our understanding of the Boston Party Scene from *Glory*?
    - HtM, 58-61

- Explain how the play of onscreen and offscreen sound affects our understanding of the scene in Bud's office from *The Apartment*.
    - HtM, 64-65

- Briefly explain how point-of-view sound works. For what narrative functions is it typically used?
    - HtM, 65-67

- Briefly explain how a voice-over works. For what narrative functions is it typically used?
    - HtM, 67-69

- Briefly explain how an audio dissolve works. For what narrative functions is it typically used?
    - HtM, 69-72

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