

The Sonic Space of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy

A study in the role of sound production in the soundtrack for the
Lord of the Rings trilogy

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Thesis MA Applied Musicology

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University of Utrecht

April 2018

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Research Questions	4
3. <i>The Lord of the Ring</i> Soundtrack	4
4. Theoretical Framework	6
5. Methodology	10
6. The Sonic Space of the <i>Lord of the Rings</i>	13
- 6.1 The Treason of Isengard	13
- 6.2 The Last Alliance Between Elves and Men	14
- 6.3 Frodo, Sam and the Destruction of the Ring	16
7. Functions and Motivations	18
- 7.1 The Treason of Isengard	18
- 7.2 The Last Alliance Between Elves and Men	22
- 7.3 Frodo, Sam and the Destruction of the Ring	24
8. Conclusions	27
9. Bibliography	29
10. Filmography	31

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1. Introduction

Research on the production of sound in film often boils down to sound design and sound effects. The use of sound production in film scores has not been extensively researched. The art of recording music in this format has not reached the level of attention that it deserves. The technology of recording music has been of great influence on the way how music is consumed, but also on how music is created and what music sounds like. In the realm of popular music it is acknowledged that through the technological developments of recording, the studio has become a compositional tool for musical expression. The ‘sound’ is the first thing anyone actually hears when listening to recorded music.¹ The sound of a recording consist of multiple aspects aside from rhythm, melody and harmony. One aspect is the texture of the music, this is best described as “the relationship between its simultaneous sounding parts,”² depending on the instrumentation, the timbre, the harmonic structure and the way how the texture is produced in the studio.³ The perceived movement and placement of sound is another aspect of importance, as sounds are moving in the recorded sound through its placement in the stereo mix. It is the way how these aspects are organized in the sonic space according to Lelio Camilleri, professor in electronic music and teacher of music and multimedia. Sonic space is “a multi-dimensional representation of the recording space in which spatial, morphological and spectral spaces interact in order to form the structure on which the sounding matter of the piece is developed.”⁴ In film music studies this aspect has received less attention than in popular music. The goal of this research is to closer investigate the role of sound production in film music and what this means in our analysis and interpretation of the functions of film music. For this thesis I researched the music for the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy directed by Peter Jackson.⁵ The soundtrack(s), composed by Howard Shore, is an acclaimed piece of film scoring,

¹Allan Moore, *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 7; David K. Blake, “Timbre as Differentiation in Indie Music,” *Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 18, n. 2 (2012); Lelio Camilleri, “Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces,” *Popular Music* 29, no. 2 (2010): 199.

²Brian Newbould, “Texture,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed February 20, 2018. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>

³Jonathan Dunsby, “Considerations of Texture,” *Music & Letters* vol. 70, no. 1 (1989): 50.

⁴Lelio Camilleri, “Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces,” *Popular Music* 29, no. 2 (2010): 199.

⁵*The Fellowship of the Ring* is released in 2001, *The Two Towers* is released in 2002, *The Return of the King* is released in 2003.

winning multiple awards.⁶ Although the soundtrack makes use of exotic scales, atonality and diverse instrumentation, the soundtrack is rooted in traditional Hollywood film scoring techniques. This thesis, however, aims to show what the studio possibilities are and how these function within the soundtrack and the film itself. These possibilities could modify or add to the experience of the viewer.

2. Research Questions

This research is about the sonic space of the soundtrack of *The Lord of the Rings* and what role this plays. The ‘motivations’ and ‘functions’ that are relevant in sub-question two are terms taken from film musicologist Emilio Audissino’s new book about neo-formalist film/ music analysis as two aspects that need to be researched and analyzed in order to understand how music works in film.⁷

Main Research Question:

What role does the sonic space have in the soundtrack of the Lord of the Rings trilogy?

Sub-questions:

1. *How can the recorded sonic space of the Lord of the Rings soundtrack be described?*
2. *What role does the sonic image play within the soundtrack’s motivations and functions?*

3. The Lord of the Rings Soundtrack

The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy employs at times a traditional scoring style reminiscent of the classic Hollywood scores. It uses a big orchestra, choir, implements leitmotifs and is almost wall-to-wall. However, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was produced in a time when the possibilities of the studio as compositional tool was utilized to a great extent. *The Lord of the Rings* soundtrack is used as a case study to show that the extent of the recording studio as a compositional and meaningful tool is prevalent on all sorts of film scoring. The soundtrack is a huge collaborative effort, not only between director Peter Jackson and composer Howard Shore, but also between the musicians,

⁶ “Lord of the Rings voted 'best movie soundtrack,’” BBC News, last modified November 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-34748803>.

⁷ Emilio Audissino, *Film/ Music Analysis: A Film Studies Approach* (Southampton: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 125.

sound mixers and editors.⁸ Shore composed more than ten hours of music with over 90 percent of the films having music.⁹ In discussing the soundtrack though, sound production is often overshadowed by the other musical elements. Yet sound production plays a huge role in today's film scoring practice. It has a wider impact than just the soundtracks filled with extreme sound effects, ambient noises and expressive complicated sound design. Modern sound production might be less noticeable in films with a focus on acoustic orchestration like *The Lord of the Rings*, but also films like *Jaws* (1975), *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *Gladiator* (2000). The soundtrack might sound more authentic or natural because of the clear presence of acoustic instrumentation, less audible adjusted by studio efforts but portraying a sort of historic reality. Some soundtracks are meant to create a historical or fantastical atmosphere so the viewer could be immersed in this fantasy world. Abrasive and prominent sound production techniques could prevent this. *The Lord of the Rings* fits this description perfectly because it has a tendency to "capture a feeling of antiquity" in its acoustic instrumentation and music.¹⁰ Shore tried to evoke an alternative historical music style based on Celtic, Nordic, and Middle Eastern music. The use of an orchestra, the acoustic instrumentation and the use of leitmotifs resemble the more traditional Romantic inspired way of film scoring, a style that was popular in many decades of film music history in Hollywood from the 1930s and 1940s to the "dramatic comeback of the Romantic idiom in a symphonic deployment"¹¹ starting in the 1970s. From there on it would "remain an attractive option for big-budget, action-adventure blockbusters."¹² Nonetheless, sound production still plays an important role as part of the soundtrack. This thesis aims to show that sound production is important in film scores that use more traditional orchestral film music where audio effects, ambient music and electronic music are less present. To answer the research questions I will analyze the music of different scenes within the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in the theatre cut of the film.¹³

The scenes that will be discussed are the following: The treason of Isengard and Saruman and the capturing and escaping of Gandalf from Isengard in the *Fellowship of the Ring*; The arrival

⁸ Howard Shore composed, orchestrated, conducted and produced the music for all three films of *The Lord of the Rings*.

⁹ Judith Bernanke, "Howard Shore's Ring Cycle: The Film Score and Operatic Strategy," In *Studying the Event Film: The Lord of the Rings*, ed. Harriet Elaine Margolis, Sean Cubitt, Barry King, and Thierry Jutel, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 176.

¹⁰ Jeff Otto, "Howard Shore Interview: The composer discusses his work on Return of the King," IGN, December 17, 2003, <http://www.ign.com/articles/2003/12/18/howard-shore-interview?page=1>.

¹¹ Kathryn Marie Kalinak, *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 72.

¹² Kalinak, *Film Music*, 72.

¹³ The DVD of the theatrical release of all three *Lord of the Rings* films will be used for analyses.

of the Elven army at the battle of Helm's Deep and the death of the captain of this army, Haldir, in *The Two Towers*; Frodo and Sam in Mordor with the goal of destroying the ring of Sauron in *The Return of the King*.

4. Theoretical Framework

Because of the ever-developing techniques for recording and audio production, the art of making music has reached a new dimension. The studio is a place where music is created and molded into a concrete artistic product. Camilleri states: "Since the advent of multitrack recording, the studio has become a compositional tool in which musical ideas are formed into sounding matter."¹⁴ The sound of a recording has become an important parameter for musical genres, they do not just transmit the more traditional parameters like melody, harmony and rhythm, but "they become organizational in their own right."¹⁵ Much of today's music styles exists because of studio technology; it shaped the sounds of particular genres. The shift from live performance art to the technologically mediated art of lots of today's music, is because of the recording studio.¹⁶ This was a change that increased over time and it "continued across all media – radio studios, film, sound stages, television studios, not just recording studios."¹⁷ However, the goals of film sound are different from those of commercial recordings, while the techniques are mostly the same.¹⁸

Recording techniques, with all their digital possibilities, and the studio in general have become some of the most important aspects of the production of sound in film as well. These days, almost every sound that is heard in film is (re)produced in the studio. Not just music is subjective to sound production, but also dialogue and Foley effects. Music plays an important part in our embodied engagement with the audiovisual medium: "The capacity of music to expressively enhance and direct feeling is a fairly central one, and scholars have underlined its affective contribution to film and television in a number of ways."¹⁹ Music has different ways of communicating tactile qualities. The sounds of particular instruments are experienced in different

¹⁴ Camilleri, "Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces," 199.

¹⁵ Camilleri, "Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces," 200.

¹⁶ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 183.

¹⁷ Susan Schmidt Horning, *Chasing Sound : Technology, Culture, and the Art of Studio Recording From Edison to the LP*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013): 3, 5.

¹⁸ Horning, *Chasing Sound*, 10.

¹⁹ Lucy Fife Donaldson, "'You Have To Feel a Sound for it to be Effective': Sonic Surfaces in Film and Television," in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound*, ed. Miguel Mera, Ronald Sadoff, Ben Winters, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 90.

ways and so do the details of a composition. A composition generates “shape and movement, contour, rise and fall, development and resolution.”²⁰ Although sound effects have been around since almost the beginning of sound film, sound effects and sound design have increasingly become something complex and vast in its own right while at the same time something that is integrated within a lot of soundtracks.²¹ Nonetheless, these developments have blurred the line between music and sound design. The hierarchical relationships between the elements of a film’s soundtrack have become destabilized. Music and soundscapes have reached a stage where the different soundtrack disciplines are interconnected. This sonic inclusiveness however initially found more ground in other parts of the traditional Hollywood soundtrack like sound effects, ambient music, and speech than music. These were easier adjustable and were less set in strict conventions and expectation. The increasing number of developments that undermine these hierarchical relationships in the soundtrack has caused a “major shift in soundtrack tradition and a substantial challenge to the principles of classical soundtrack that constitute the backbone of mainstream practice.”²² This is one end of the spectrum of sound production. Music production, on the other end, is about the actual composed music which is greatly enhanced by the possibilities of the studio. Working on sound film challenges the many different disciplines to work together to create either multiple layers of sound or enhance one single sound, it is the layering of sound effects, dialogue, and music.²³

Work on a soundtrack is a huge collaborative process. The composer might write the score, but he has to work closely with the musicians, producers, director, sound director and editors, recording engineers, sound designers and other members of the creative team. The soundtrack can be seen as the product of a collaboration between all those different roles in the production process and the technical characteristics of the (filmic) medium itself.²⁴ The production process has changed and the use of music has changed with it. A huge influence on contemporary film and television was the incorporation of computer-aided technology. This brought about a shift in the possibilities of composers, as did it change the requirements for being a film composer as new film

²⁰ Donaldson, “Sonic Surfaces,” 90.

²¹ Julio d’Escriván, “Sound Art (?) on/in Film,” *Organised Sound* 14, no. 1 (2009): 65–73.

²² Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, “Sound Design and its Interactions with Music: Changing Historical Perspectives,” in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound*, ed. Miguel Mera, Ronald Sadoff, Ben Winters, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 127, 130, 135.

²³ Donaldson, “Sonic Surfaces,” 92.

²⁴ Ben Winters, “The Composer and the Studio: Korngold and Warner Bros.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music*, ed. Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 51, 65.

composers didn't have to be able to write sheet music in order to create relatable and functional music in different ways.²⁵ Film music composers found a new way to not only compose music for film through the use of scores, but music has to be translated into a recorded format, a format that ushers countless opportunities in the expression of the music. Musicologist and film music composer Sergi Casanelles calls these new methods "hyperorchestration tools because they involve the utilization of a hyperorchestra, a virtual music ensemble that inhabits hyperreality, a product of the combination of virtual instruments, real live recording sessions and sound processing."²⁶ The traditional Western orchestra has been one of the dominant modes of musical expression for film and television music, especially in classic Hollywood cinema. The instrumental combinations and ways of scoring have been linked practices based on primarily notation and the utilization of the musical score. The recorded hyperorchestra "allows the composer to surpass the limitations imposed by the score."²⁷ "Hyperinstruments utilized in film and television become virtually tailored instruments that fulfil a precise purpose in terms of giving meaning to an audio-visual work."²⁸ This whole process of recording the orchestra for film is bigger than the function a written score has. All instruments are sculpted in their sound and are mixed into the final produced sound for film. The compositional palette is not just the written score anymore, but the sound spectrum as a whole. It adds a new dimension to the music, "Hyperorchestration means thinking about music in terms of sound."²⁹ Casanelles writes that mixing techniques "become a means to hyperorchestrate in a musical framework that transcends the foundations of Western classical music based on the musical score." *The Lord of the Rings* soundtrack can be placed in the development and practice of this idea of the hyperorchestra. It uses exclusively acoustic instrumentation, but the music is mixed and produced in a sophisticated way in the post-production that might recall modern hyper-orchestrated soundtracks.

A way of making the recording space something tangible is by visualising this imagined space. Musicologists Ruth Dockwray and Allan Moore imagined this as a visual performance that is created in the mind. They conceptualized this in terms of a 'sound-box.' A 4-dimensional virtual

²⁵ Sergi Casanelles, "Mixing as a Hyperorchestration Tool," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sound Design and Music in Screen Media: Integrated Soundtracks*, ed. Liz Greene and Danijla Kulezic-Wilson (London: Springer Nature, 2016), 57-58.

²⁶ Casanelles, "Mixing as a Hyperorchestration Tool," 58.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

space where sounds are placed according to certain characteristics.³⁰ Camilleri's sonic space is a similar model to describe the multidimensional levels of a recording, divided into three overlapping categories: 'localised space,' 'spectral space' and the 'morphological space'. The 'localized space' refers to the placement and the position of the sound in the stereo space, with relation to the depth of the sounds and the spectral content. The spectral content is related to the 'spectral space' of singular sounds and combination of sounds in terms of texture and timbre. Timbre as a specific element will be further discussed in the next paragraph. The temporal perception is something to consider as well because music is about the development of sounds, but also its development in the shape of the sound structure. This is what Camilleri calls the 'morphological space'. This is the sense of motion experienced within the sound structure as part of a space/time relationship.³¹

Timbre is an aspect, as part of the 'spectral space,' that needs more elaborating as it is definitely part of the sonic space. In relation to acoustics, timbre is the unique tonal quality of a specific sound that is defined by overtones.³² Timbre also encompasses the spectral space described by Camilleri saying that this "plays a relevant role in the overall perception of space."³³ He juxtaposes the spectral space as metaphorical with the perceptive sensation of 'localized space.' However, because of the spectral content of the different timbres that can be applied we can "experience a sense of saturation or emptiness."³⁴ The complex nature of timbre makes it a difficult subject, there is not a consensus among scholars about what timbre means and what it entails exactly, but it seems clear that it is of great importance in our musical experience and maybe as important as melody, rhythm and harmony. This transcends to the idea that the timbre of a sound creates a certain perception of emotion when a melody affected by this timbre is played.³⁵ Timbre has a strong relation to musical composition, where specific choices are made for single instruments and for clustering various different timbres.³⁶ It is also one of the "principal ways through which performers communicate musical structure, ideas, emotions and musical

³⁰ Ruth Dockwray and Allan F. Moore, "Configuring the Sound-Box 1965–1972," *Popular Music* 29, no. 2 (2010): 181.

³¹ Camilleri, "Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces," 201-203.

³² Murray Campbell, "Timbre (i)," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 9, 2018.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>

³³ Camilleri, "Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces," 202.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

³⁵ Julia Hailstone, Rohani Omar, Susie Henley, Chris Frost, Michael Kenward, and Jason Warren, "It's Not What You Play, It's How You Play It: Timbre Affects Perception of Emotion in Music." *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 62, No. 11 (2009): 2141-2155.

³⁶ Pierre Boulez. "Timbre and Composition – Timbre and Language," trans.R. Robertson, *Contemporary Music Review* 2, Nn. 1 (1987): 161.

personality.”³⁷ According to Musicologist David Blake, timbre is also an important factor in recorded music, mostly popular music, and states that it is the main point of musical differentiation in several musical genres, even more so than melody, rhythm, or harmony.³⁸ An important statement made by Blake relating to the spectral space category of Camilleri is that timbre causes a perceptive sense of musical motility. “Musical motility allows the artist to project meaningful sound into a sound space.”³⁹ This perception is possible to understand as several perceived characteristics like the perception of sound as being near or far, full or empty sounding, distorted or clean, and homogeneous (the lack of variety or transformation of a sound).⁴⁰ Camilleri sees the placement of a sound in the spectral space as having to do with the frequencies of a sound. With this vertical dimension is created where low frequency sounds are perceived at the bottom and high frequency sounds at the top.⁴¹

5. Methodology

To be able to answer the research questions a number of models and theories will be employed. To analyze and establish sound production of the music in the film I will use the three-dimensional space model by Camilleri.⁴² This provides a way to describe the sound as a whole and what is happening in the sound itself like its placement in the stereo, its development, and the way it fills the sonic space. The ‘localized space’ is defined by depth in a near-far dimension and position and motion in a left-center-right dimension. To concretize the rather vague left-center-right analyses this space needs some adjusting for analysis. A scale system will be used to be able to describe this. From indications that a sound is placed far left to the middle to the far right I will use the following indications: L2 – L1 – M0 – R1 – R2.

The ‘spectral space’ is defined by how the instruments sound on a recording and how the spectral content changes over time. Camilleri also defines this in terms of frequency: low frequency (perceived at the bottom of the sonic space), medium frequency (perceived at the middle of the sonic space), high frequency (perceived at the top of the sonic space). This categorization can be

³⁷ Patricia Holmes, “An Exploration of Musical Communication through Expressive Use of Timbre: The Performer’s Perspective,” *Psychology of Music* 40, no. 3 (2012): 301.

³⁸ David Blake, “Timbre as Differentiation in Indie Music,” *Music Theory Online* 18, no. 2 (2012): 1.

³⁹ Blake, “Timbre as Differentiation in Indie Music,” 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*, 5-6.

⁴¹ Camilleri, “Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces,” 203-205.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 203-205.

further objectified for analysis and will be described in combination with the indication of register. The spectral content is also experienced as a sense of saturation or emptiness.⁴³

The ‘morphological space’ is related to the temporal perception of the sonic space. Sounds evolve in different ways and this causes changes in the sensory perception: a sense of direction and motion, the lack of direction or motion, cyclicity or a repetitive variation. “The ‘morphological space’ articulates the space/time relationship.”⁴⁴

The next step is to use this information on sound production and the sonic space and apply it within the film/ music analysis model by Emilio Audissino. He developed and wrote about this model in his new book from 2017, *Film/ Music Analysis: A Film Studies Approach*. Although he comes from a film centric background, his goal with this model is to bridge the gap between musicologists and film theorists analyzing film music and basis his theories and models from various leading scholars like Claudia Gorbman, Michel Chion, David Bordwell and Nicholas Cook. He uses a Neoformalist approach and Gestalt-based theorization to analyze film music. His model provides the tools to analyze how single cinematic devices (mise-en-scene, camerawork, lighting, editing, optical effects, sound effects, music) work within the film’s greater system as a whole.

If music is treated as a cinematic device, the key to the Neoformalist film/music analysis is to focus on what the motivations and functions are of a particular piece of music in a particular moment of the film, and how these functions and motivations influence one or more of the three levels— stylistic, narrative, thematic—within the overall formal system.⁴⁵

The ‘motivation’ for a musical device is the justification for its presence. According to Audissino music can be motivated in four ways which can be combined: realistically motivated, compositionally motivated, transtextually motivated, and artistically motivated.⁴⁶ Music is ‘realistically motivated’ when its presence is expected because the visualization of the ‘real’ world asks for it. Music is ‘compositionally motivated’ when it helps us construct the plot by making narrative progress, clarifies narrative information, helps us engage with the characters and gives

⁴³ Camilleri, “Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces,” 202.

⁴⁴ Ibid.,” 202-203.

⁴⁵ Audissino, *Film/ Music Analysis*, 125-127.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 125-127.

possible interpretations. Music is ‘transtextually motivated’ when a type of music belongs to the genre conventions of the film. It is ‘artistically motivated’ when it is only there for aesthetic effect.⁴⁷ In the case of this thesis, the filmic device researched is the music and the sound production. Audissino’s model helps to uncover how the sonic space is applied and what role it plays in the soundtrack.⁴⁸

The ‘function’ of a musical device is what effect it has in the film. Audissino recognized three ‘functions’ that music can perform, based on the three areas of activity of film viewing: emotion, perception, and cognition.⁴⁹ Music has an ‘emotive function’ when its main goal is to evoke an emotional reaction. The ‘emotive function’ can further be divided by its ‘micro-emotive function’, meaning a device produces a mood or emotion locally, and its ‘macro-emotive function’, meaning music builds mood, emotion and recollection over the whole film. Music has a ‘perceptive function’ when it helps the viewer configure the ‘spatio-temporal perception’ of the scene. This means there is a subdivision here as well. The first is a ‘spatial-perceptive function’ that guides music attention to actions and details in a shot, scene or sequence. The second is a ‘temporal-perceptive function’ which plays a role in the perceived rhythm, pace and temporal direction. Music has a ‘cognitive function’ when it helps to interpret and understand complex narrative relations or interpret implicit or symptomatic meanings. The ‘cognitive function’ can also be divided into two subdivisions. A ‘denotative cognitive function’ helps comprehend narrative developments and connects relations, while a ‘connotative cognitive function’ helps interpret ambiguous or hidden meaning.⁵⁰

For this research it is important to clarify that music for film is produced in a much higher audio quality than most people experience. Laptops, tablets and TV’s don’t provide the same audio quality as the cinema’s and have a compressed sound. To come as closely as possible to the originally produced sound on the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack and how it is presented in the theatres I will use headphones to get the most relevant idea of how the sound is experienced in the theatres, in surround sound, bearing in mind that it is not the same, but does provide a method of listening, watching and analyzing the film and its score. The placement of sound and the relation between the produced sounds is still audible through this method therefore this is a realistic way of

⁴⁷ Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 125.

⁴⁸ The four motivations will be indicated in the analysis with single quotation marks.

⁴⁹ Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 130.

⁵⁰ Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 130-145.

analyzing the sound production of the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack. It does however causes this thesis to have some problems with the validity to a certain extent. There is however no possibility to analyze the music in the cinema. This means valuable findings have to be drawn with the possibilities at hand.

6. The Sonic Space of the *Lord of the Rings*

How can the recorded sonic space of the Lord of the Rings soundtrack be described?

6.1 The Treason of Isengard

The Treason of Isengard is the name given to the treachery of Saruman when he changes sides and joins Sauron and eventually fights Gandalf.⁵¹ Gandalf approaches Isengard while the horns play the fellowship theme in M0 of the ‘localized space.’ Gandalf tells Saruman that the lost ring of power is with Frodo. Saruman claims that Sauron is too strong and too powerful for them to have a real chance against him and eventually says they should join Sauron. When Gandalf turns this down they end up fighting. The music in the fighting scene intensifies. First strings are heard in the C register in both L1 and R1 of the ‘localized space’ during the first blows, then a male choir in c register is heard in both L1 and R1 as well. Eventually the low frequency instruments in the ‘spectral space’ are combined with the timbre of the treble sounding trumpets also playing in a c register and being placed on both sides as well.⁵² So instead of creating a well-defined sonic space where every instrument takes a clear ‘localized space,’ most of the sounds are placed around the listener. This decreases when Saruman takes away Gandalf’s staff. Saruman sends Gandalf up in the air. The choir and trumpets join the mix again filling up the entire sonic space with the increasing volume making the sound upfront and intrusive. The music is combined with the sound effects and the screaming voice of Gandalf.⁵³ This creates a saturated, intense sound that seems melted together into one.

Gandalf is captured and stuck on top of the tower of Isengard. In this scene we see what Isengard has become, a dark construction site filled with Orcs and fire.⁵⁴ This is the first time we hear the Isengard theme characterized by low brass instruments playing the melody and a steady

⁵¹ The scene starts on 00:38:30 with Gandalf riding towards Isengard.

⁵² The music starts on 00:42:13 and ends on 00:42:47

⁵³ The music starts on 00:43:00.

⁵⁴ The scene starts on 01:04:57 with a shot of the wall of Isengard.

5/4 rhythm on percussive instruments that seems a combination of low sounding drums and metallic percussion.⁵⁵ This theme is mostly heard in M0 and R1 of the ‘localized space.’ While the camera pans over the construction site, suddenly a moth enters the screen and at this moment a female choir, singing in a mezzo-soprano vocal range joins the sonic space from L2 and moving towards the middle of the ‘localized space.’ With this it pushes away the sound effects of the site and the Isengard theme. As the moth is tracked and flies towards Gandalf, a solo soprano voice is placed in M0. Gandalf catches and whispers something to the moth until it flies off.⁵⁶

The last scene revolves around Gandalf escaping Isengard.⁵⁷ Gandalf is being tossed around by Saruman on top of the tower of Isengard. The Isengard theme isn’t played but the timbre of the horns seem to resemble the horns of the Isengard theme. Saruman lets Gandalf float on the edge of the tower while we hear these horns in the middle on the ‘localized space.’ When the moth flies over Gandalf’s head however, the chorus heard earlier, is placed in R1, silencing the horns. The chorus disappears for a brief moment when the moth is off-screen and the horns return in L1 when Saruman is framed from the perspective of Gandalf.⁵⁸ When Gandalf sees the moth appearing again along with an Eagle next to Saruman’s head the chorus is heard again in R1 of the ‘localized space’. This results in hearing both characteristic short pieces of music next to each other in the sonic space. There is a lot of development in the ‘morphological space’ as the music is in turns heard in the left and right side of the ‘localized space’. The sonic space is quiet empty except for the horns and the choir that come and go. When Gandalf sees the eagle appear he decided to jump of the tower to be caught by the eagle who flies him out of Isengard.

6.2 *The Last Alliance Between Elves and Men*

Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli are preparing for the battle with Saruman’s Uruk-Hai at Helm’s Deep.⁵⁹ Suddenly they here a strange horn in the distance. It is the horn of an Elven army that surprisingly came to aid in the battle. This army is under order of Haldir. The Elven army entering Helm’s Deep is underscored by an angelic choir singing the Lothlórien theme (Elves) but with distinctive martial percussion added to enhance the military connotations of their arrival. The sound

⁵⁵ Anvils and hammers are used in the metallic percussion.

⁵⁶ The moth appears on screen on 01:05:26. The choir starts singing from this moment.

⁵⁷ The scene starts on 01:14:39 as Gandalf recalls his escape.

⁵⁸ The moth appears on 01:14:54 as well as the choir is heard and ends with Gandalf jumping of the tower on 01:15:18.

⁵⁹ Scene starts on 02:08:00.

production in this causes the sonic space to be filled with music and almost no other sounds. This makes the music clearly audible. There is also little development in the ‘morphological space’ and a consistent balance in the ‘spectral’ and ‘localized space.’

The battle at Helm’s Deep is in full flight with drums, strings and horns underscoring the fighting.⁶⁰ The music is constantly on both sides of the ‘localized space’ with every instrument group taking their own space making the sonic space well defined and stable, it is however buried under the sound effects of people screaming, swords clanging, shields breaking and other sounds you might expect to hear. The Uruk-Hai eventually blow up the wall at its weak spot. This causes the music to die down for a couple of seconds while we see the ravage of the explosion. Soon enough the rapid music continues playing again as the fighting continues. Still the music seems to be produced in a rather conventional way, in service of the music itself and the to distract as little as possible, focusing on the action. The music is often produced in a way that when leitmotifs are playing, they are heard clearly between the battle sounds to highlight certain action filled and heroic moments. For example when the Fellowship theme is heard when Legolas surfs down the steps of the wall on a shield.⁶¹

The next connected scene to the fight at Helm’s Deep starts with an opening shot that basically continues where the previous scene ended but there is something distinctively different about the music.⁶² The music has taken a minor key and has slowed down significantly. Strings are placed mostly in the middle of the ‘localized space.’ The music, however, is much more audible, clear and seems near in terms of depth. This is because the sound effects of the battle itself are muted. Aragorn screams to Haldir to retreat, the music dies down completely. Haldir is cut by an Uruk-Hai and in this moment we hear a single mezzo-soprano singing in a c’ register in the middle of the ‘localized space’ with low strings in a C register underneath it.⁶³ The voice seems very close and upfront. The sound effects of the battle are even more toned down at this moment as Haldir is stabbed in the back. We only hear his breathing, Aragorn screaming and other unidentifiable sound effects. Haldir eventually dies in Aragorn’s arms. The music underscoring this is enhanced by a rather empty sonic space with most of the sounds being only in the middle. The ‘morphological space’ is quite stable as there is little development in the structure of the sonic space.

⁶⁰ The scene starts on 02:17:47.

⁶¹ The Fellowship theme starts on 02:20:54 and ends on 02:21:10.

⁶² The scene starts on 02:22:58.

⁶³ The music starts when Haldir is cut on 02:23:44.

6.3 Frodo, Sam and the destruction of the Ring

The last scenes discussed follow the destruction of the ring by Frodo and Sam.⁶⁴ Frodo is captured by Orcs after he had been paralyzed by a sting of Shelob the spider. When Frodo wakes up, an Orc comes up the ladder and pursues to threaten Frodo. The Orc is however stabbed in the back by Sam. The strings underscoring the reunification of Frodo and Sam sounds soft and are placed in L1 and R1 in the ‘localized space’ surrounding the dialogue. Frodo thinks the Orcs took the ring, Sam however shows that they haven’t. From this moment on the strings die down quickly and a low sustaining sound combined with high pitched screeches are taking over the sonic space. Most of the diegetic sounds are muted. The low bass sounds actuate on and off, almost like a heartbeat. The sonic space is very destabilized and you could argue that this is more sound effect than music. Frodo asks for the ring while Sam hesitates to give the ring back. Multiple sounds enter the sonic space on various sides: whispers in a foreign tongue, the high pitched screeches, screams, angelic vocals that almost sound like they start to sing a song but then immediately die down. These sounds move around the sonic space, changing in ‘spectral content.’⁶⁵ From the moment that Frodo grasps the ring back, the sonic space surrounding the ring stops and we experience a fairly normal sonic space.

Frodo and Sam are climbing Mount Doom.⁶⁶ In this moment we hear low strings in a C register that are buried under the low growling sound effects of Mount Doom whose timbre and pitch buries the strings. When Frodo starts to crawl his way up Mount Doom, suddenly a tin whistle sets in playing a melody that is similar to the Shire theme only in the c” register instead of the c’ register.⁶⁷ It is also the timbre of the tin whistle that resembles the music that is often associated with the Shire. The tin whistle is placed in the middle of the rather empty sonic space. The flute is accompanied by strings in R1 at first and later also in L1 of the ‘localized space.’ Considering the ‘spectral space,’ this theme is in strong contrast with the low sustained rumble of the mountain. A little later we see Sam crawling towards Frodo as the sonic space get a bit fuller with a chorus and strings in the middle and R1 of the sonic space.⁶⁸ The music changes when Sam starts to talk to Frodo about the Shire and all that is good in the world. At this moment the same tin whistle sets in

⁶⁴ The first scene starts at 02:21:22.

⁶⁵ The sounds design/music connected to the ring starts at 02:22:18 and ends at 02:22:56.

⁶⁶ This scene starts at 02:32:37.

⁶⁷ The music starts playing at 02:33:03 and ends at 02:33:43.

⁶⁸ The music starts playing at 02:34:13 and ends on 02:34:38 when a new piece of music sets in.

playing the first notes of the Shire theme as it develops into a new melody. With this a rather empty space is created with only the tin whistle in the middle of the sonic space and a choir in R2.⁶⁹ The choir moves to the middle as it remains being heard in R1, strings join the mix as well in M0, which thickens the sonic space as the music changes to a minor mode as Frodo gets more distressed. Slowly the music gets more intense. The strings and chorus intensifies in the sonic space as Sam urges Frodo to “get rid of it, once and for all” as the music changes to a major mode again. Sam decided that he can carry Frodo to the top of Mount Doom, at this moment the volume is rising and the placement of the instruments in the sonic space is more spread out as well. At the same time brass instruments join the sonic space stretching out the ‘spectral space’ and appearing left and right in the ‘localized space’ creating a very full sound. The ‘morphological space’ in this scene is changing constantly with many different ways of how the music is placed in the sonic space as it constantly changes from an empty space towards a full saturated space.

Frodo enters Mount Doom while Sam watches Frodo enter from a distance after a fight with Gollum.⁷⁰ A lot of noise is produced by the volcano of Mount Doom as Sam walks inside and watches Frodo who is about to destroy the ring. This is underscored by high pitched strings in the c” register in both L1 and R1 of the ‘localized space.’ Frodo is holding the ring in front of him and looking at it. Suddenly the music dies down and the same sound design is employed as when Sam hesitates to give the ring back discussed earlier, now even more intense.⁷¹ This form of sound design is heard until Frodo turns around and says to Sam “the ring is mine,” and pursues to slowly put the ring on his finger. From this moment on a low intense chorus in the c register is filling up the entire sonic space. Gollum however caught up with Sam and Frodo in Mordor. After Gollum knocks Sam down with a rock he manages to bite of the ring from Frodo’s finger. The intense music stop as Gollum looks at the ring. At this moment a high angelic voice in the c” register in the middle of the sonic space is heard with a male chorus harmonizing underneath.⁷² As Gollum starts to dance and jump of joy we hear the Ring theme one last time in L2 of the ‘localized space.’ The sonic space however is still rather empty, although the music is clear and sounds near. Frodo at this moment gets up and walks towards Gollum again to try to recapture the ring. From this moment

⁶⁹ The variation on the Shire theme starts playing on 02:34:39 and ends on 02:36:25.

⁷⁰ The scene starts at 02:39:38.

⁷¹ The sound design/ music starts on 02:40:45 and ends on 02:41:20, from this moment on we hear the chorus that underscores the battle between Frodo and Gollum until Gollum looks at the ring on 02:42:51.

⁷² The music starts at 02:42:51 ending on 02:43:56 when Gollum falls in the lava of Mount Doom.

on a loud chorus, brass and percussion completely fill the sonic space is again with sounds coming from all sides of the ‘localized space.’ The music stops when Gollum falls off the rock into the lava. Frodo fell off as well but managed to grab a rock and hang on the edge of the cliff. As Sam comes to save Frodo yet again we quietly hear a chorus and strings, almost drowned in the sound effects of the volcano. But as soon as these sound effects are muted the music intensifies and becomes more clear and louder. When Frodo does manage to grab the hand of Frodo the music yet again fills the entire sonic space.⁷³ At this same moment the ring is destroyed in the lava of Mount Doom, and with this, Sauron is destroyed. The ‘morphological space’ of the last scenes is constantly changing, moving from a quiet and open sonic space to a loud and saturated sonic space with many sounds moving in the ‘localized space’ as well. This makes the sonic space extremely unstable.

7. Functions and Motivations

What role does the sonic image play within the soundtrack’s motivations and functions?

7.1 The Treason of Isengard

The first music that appears is the Fellowship theme, which is the most prominent leitmotif used in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (portrayed below).



Figure 1: The Fellowship Theme

This is the second time the theme is heard, but this time it sounds more developed. The main melody, played on horns, is placed the middle of the ‘localized space’ with the other instruments around it. This theme is a strongly ‘compositionally motivated’ as leitmotifs are an important narrative aspect in Hollywood cinema as variation in these themes in different moments “makes

⁷³ The soft chorus and strings start on 02:44:37 with the music ending on 02:45:16 when the ring is destroyed.

the narrative passages and links stronger and clear, and the overall narrative composition more cohesive.”⁷⁴ The leitmotifs establish an association, the power after its introduction, as Musicologist Matthew Bribitzer-Stull states, “rests on synecdoche: a piece (just the music) of a whole (multi-media, visual, dramatic, musical synthesis) returns, standing in for the whole and pulling along with it all the other pieces.”⁷⁵ The Fellowship theme connects many characters and narrative moments over the three different films in different variations of the theme. The Fellowship leitmotif has ‘emotive’, ‘perceptive’ and ‘cognitive functions.’ Sound production however doesn’t seem to play a specific part in this other than making the music sound clear and audible. The sound production serves a functional and subtle purpose in service of the music itself.

The same can be said of the music used to underscore the discussion Gandalf and Saruman are having where the music is placed on both sides of the ‘localized space’ to give way to the voices of the characters. However, the swelling of the music in the ‘morphological space’ indicates some inconsistency and possible danger going back and forth from a rather full sonic space to an empty one. This is in contrast with the sonic space that is experienced when Gandalf and Saruman start to fight as the ‘morphological space’ fills up over time. Music is placed on both sides of the ‘localized space’ as described in the previous chapter. This makes the sonic space saturated and full, with everything blended together. This effect is intensified when Saruman sends Gandalf up in the hollow tower. The music and the sonic space, combined with the sound effects of Gandalf flying and his screaming voice, result in an intense wall of sound. In these cases the sound production seems ‘compositionally motivated’ as it resembles a sort of entrapment and distress which could help us engage with Gandalf. With this it should also be clear that the sound production aids in the music having a ‘micro-emotive function.’ The sound is very saturated as the whole of the sonic space is filled with sounds mirroring the intense fighting. This helps in sustaining the chaotic and aggressive mood of the scene. The rising tension and distress are reflected in the intensifying sonic space. The sound production also causes the music to have a ‘temporal-perceptive function’ as the developing morphology of the sonic space connects with the perceived rhythm, pace and temporal direction of the fight. As Audissino pointed out “time

⁷⁴ Audissino, *Film/ Music analysis*, 126.

⁷⁵ Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, “The Phenomenon of Musical Association.” In *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015,) 107.

configurations in the visuals may correspond to the rhythm and pace of editing or the rhythm and space.”⁷⁶

The next scene shows the dark industrialization of Isengard. This is an important aspect in the *Lord of the Rings* in relation to Saruman and Isengard. This development seems to show a “adversarial stance towards nature.”⁷⁷ The domination over nature and is portrayed as a threatening development. Isengard became a factory designed to manufacture armor, weapons, Orcs and Uruk-Hai for Saruman, “his is a war economy and Isengard his military-complex.”⁷⁸ This is in stark contrast with for example the pastoral based and nature-loving civilization of the goodhearted Hobbits. The darkness and industrialization of Isengard is represented in the music as well with the Isengard theme being heard for the first time over the opening shots of the ‘new’ Isengard. The theme is portrayed in figure 2 below.

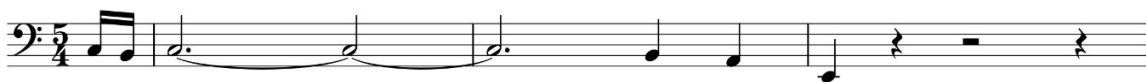


Figure 2: The Isengard Theme

The percussion in its 5/4 meter causes a sort of machinic effect. Not only because of the off-kilter rhythm, but also because of the timbre of the percussion. Shore used instruments that resemble the metallic sounds that you would hear in a factory, emphasizing the industrial nature of Isengard and motivating this choice ‘compositionally’ and ‘artistically.’ The metallic sounds helps in comprehending the narrative development in the story, the development of Isengard towards a dark and industrial factory. With this in mind, it can be concluded that the music serves as a ‘denotative cognitive function.’ Although most of this information comes from what we see in the shots itself, the music and the choices made in instrumentation enhances our understanding of what Isengard turned into. This ‘cognitive function’ falls in line with Claudia Gorbman’s musical function of ‘narrative cueing,’ as the chosen musical instruments and timbre’s gives narrative cues to the nature of Isengard.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Audissino, *Film/ Music*, 138.

⁷⁷ Lianne McLarty, “Social Masculinity, Whiteness, and Class in The Lord of the Rings” in *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson’s Lord of the Rings*, ed. Ernest Mathijs and Murray Pomerance, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006), 176.

⁷⁸ McLarty, “Social Masculinity, Whiteness, and Class in The Lord of the Rings,” 176-177.

⁷⁹ Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, (London: Indiana University Press, 1987), 72.

Something peculiar happens in the music and sound production when the camera pans over the industrial grounds of Isengard and the moth appears in the shot. An angelic sounding chorus joins the sonic space from L2 and takes over the Isengard theme that is predominantly heard in the M0 and R1 of the ‘localized space’. The chorus is positioned in the middle of the ‘localized space’. A high single voice in c” register in an operatic style is placed up front in the middle of the ‘localized space’. This indicates a ‘compositionally motivated’ choice for the music and the sound production. The centrality seems aimed at the moth that flies towards Gandalf, as it placed in the middle of the shot as well. Every other sound is almost completely muted as if Isengard isn’t even there. As the moth flies towards Gandalf it becomes clear that the moth is here for Gandalf and the music and sound production indicates that a change in situation for Gandalf is possible as the music that accompanies the moth pushes away the Isengard theme. With these indications in the music and what happens on screen some narrative information is unfolded as it has the possibility to comprehend that the moth is of importance to Gandalf and might be there to help. There is a clear ‘compositional motivation’ present in the use and change of the music itself, but also in the way how the angelic music on the left takes over the Isengard theme on the right. The sound productions plays an important ‘spatial-perceptive’ and ‘denotative cognitive function.’ With the former, the music guides our attention to the little detail in the shot, the moth. This helps us understand that the moth is there for a reason. This is enhanced by the fact that the sonic space is centered and it blocks out not only the Isengard theme, but all the noise that is heard from the Isengard grounds. The moth flies directly towards Gandalf. The shots, the mise-en-scene and the music and its sound production make Gandalf the focal point of the scene when Gandalf whispers something to the moth. From this moment on we know that something in Gandalf situation is about to change and with it creates suspense.

The use of localizing sounds in different sides of the ‘localized space’ for a ‘spatial-perceptive function’ is even more prominent in the next scene. This is the scene where Gandalf manages to escape. The ‘localized space’



Figure 3: Visualization of the sonic space mirroring the shot

in this scene resembles the composition of the shots, this is visualized in figure 3. The way how the music is placed in the ‘localized space’ is a mirror of what happens on screen. This helps us guide our attention to the actions that are unfolding on screen, with this is also creates a stronger tension between the two opposing sides. The sounding music in the L2 of the ‘localized space’ is related to Saruman and Isengard. The music in R2 is related to the moth and the eagle. The motivation of this is to guide our eyes to what is happening on screen and at the same time creates a divide between Gandalf and Saruman, as if the music is fighting for a place in the sonic space. With this the sound production plays an important role in the ‘spatial-perceptive function’ of the music. The sonic space follows the actions and composition of the shots closely to a strong effect for the viewer.

7.2 *The Last Alliance Between Elves and Men*

The music underscoring the arrival of the Elves accentuates the presence of the Elves. The music is ‘compositionally motivated’ as it makes narrative progress. The Lothlórien theme sung by the angelic choir in the c’ register is associated with the Elves. This theme is portrayed in figure 3 below.



Figure 4: *The Lothlórien theme*

This helps us understand that what we see is an Elven army without it being spelled out for the viewer. At the same time we don’t hear any other sounds in this moment, the focus is completely on the music and the images of the Elves. The sonic space is balanced with little development in the sound structure. The main goal of the sound production is to make the music as audible and clear as possible. With this the sound production doesn’t specifically enhance the ‘motivation’ of the music. As a result, the sound production also doesn’t play a specific role in the ‘functions’ of the music. Although a case can be made by looking at the lack of ‘morphological’ development that the sound production aids the music in sustaining the mood as part of the ‘micro-emotive function’ of the music. Too much development or an irregular ‘localized space’ could distract the viewer when the music itself has to deliver the message.

The presence of the music in the fighting scenes is ‘compositionally motivated.’ The underscoring of the fighting involves multiple leitmotifs like the Fellowship theme and the Lothlórien theme. The music is often fast-paced, with a lot of melodic changes. The focus, however, is never on the music because the combination of the sound production and the sound effects tends to bury a lot of the music. The music has a ‘temporal-perceptive function’ as it affects the perceived rhythm and pace that is enhanced by the music, the fast cutting, the active movement of the actors and the constant presence of the diegetic sound effects of the fighting itself. The sound production itself however remains inaudible to a certain degree, akin to Gorbman’s musical function of inaudibility.⁸⁰

Like established in the previous chapter, the music and the sound production in the next scene is noticeable different than the one just discussed. The fighting still continues but the sound effects have been muted making the music more prominent. The music in this scene is again ‘compositionally motivated’ as we can interpret that something is about to happen because of its contrast with the previous scene. At the same time it clarifies narrative information and helps us engage with the characters. From the moment that Haldir is cut for the first time, an ethereal mezzo-soprano sings in a c’ register, placed upfront and in the middle of the ‘localized space’ while the surrounding diegetic sounds are muted. This helps us focus on what is happening and the importance of it. The music and the sonic space touch on two functions of music in the scene: a ‘micro-emotive function’ and a ‘denotative cognitive function.’

The music has a ‘micro-emotive function’ as it helps enhance the sad mood of the scene where we see Haldir dying. The clear prominence of the music in the sonic space has the ability to enhance the emotional connection to the scene. Due to the ‘spectral space’ and the ‘localized space’ the sonic space sounds very open and spacious. This is a structure of the sonic space that we often hear in relation to the Elves. In this scene it helps in portraying the emotional yet hopeless feelings of Haldir who knows that his life is ending. The ‘morphological space’ is quite stable and with this helps in sustaining the mood and emotions connected to the scene. The music has the possibility to work on an emotive level as described by Gorbman and Annabel Cohen.⁸¹ The sound production aids in sustaining this emotional level.

⁸⁰ Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 72.

⁸¹ Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 72; Annabel Cohen, “Music as a Source of Emotion in Film,” in *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research*, ed. Patrik Juslin and John Sloboda, (New York: Oxford University Press,) 249-277.

At the same time the music has a ‘denotative function’. The music and sound production help in stressing the importance in the scene of what happens on a narrative level and helps the viewer think about why the death of Haldir is depicted so dramatically and what this means. Haldir didn’t play a prominent role until now. We do know however that the Elves are leaving Middle-Earth to go to the undying lands. It seems that Haldir’s death is portrayed so dramatically because this is the last time they indeed fight together again. The role of the Elves as a species in the fight against Sauron is minimal, with the exception of Legolas and Elrond. Haldir’s death symbolizes the end of the role of the Elves on Middle-Earth. This connection is also established by the angelic chorus that is often associated with the Elves. Another factor that seems to symbolize this connection is the shot of death Elven bodies intercut with Haldir’s last seconds. A lack of development in the ‘morphological space’ with a clearly defined ‘localized’ and ‘spectral space’ could help in being ‘invisible’ when it is combined with many other sound effects and a lot of action going on. However, when the music is much more prominent, it has the ability to sustain the mood and with this stresses the importance of the music that we hear in combination with the narrative unfoldment on screen.

7.3 Frodo, Sam and the destruction of the Ring

When Sam saved Frodo, he is hesitant to give the ring back. There is an argument to be made that what we hear from that moment is more sound effect to portray the psychological personal conflict the ring is causing. It will however be included because of its importance and the musical elements that are present. Low frequency bass sounds in the lowest register that actuate like a heartbeat are placed in L1 and R1 of the ‘localized space’. Other abstract sounds are placed in the mix as well like high screeches, an angelic voice and whispers. This part of the sound design is placed there with ‘compositional motivation’ as it is meant for narrative clarification. This means that it has a strong ‘denotative cognitive function.’ Because of the dissonant and abstract sounds and its placement in the sonic space from the moment Sam shows the ring to Frodo and hesitates to give it back we can detect an internal struggle. This is amplified because all the other sounds are muted. Sam is hesitating to give the ring back as he sees Frodo’s depraved behavior and seems shocked by his envious reaction. Sam knows what the Ring has done to Frodo and questions if it is the right choice to give the ring back. Sound design in this scene is working on a psychological dimension

of sound and with this we can see the prove that sound design is “increasingly entrusted with complex non-diegetic tasks,” as Julio d’Escriván pointed out.⁸²

As Sam and Frodo crawl their way up at Mount Doom, the tin whistle in the c” register is able to distinct itself from the sound effects due to its timbre. This tin whistle plays the first three notes of the Shire theme in a higher register, after which it develops into a new theme. The timbre of the tin whistle makes the connection with the Shire as well as it resembles to pastoral music we hear in the Shire. The music is again ‘compositionally motivated’ as its functions on a narrative level. The tin whistle is placed in the middle of the ‘localized space’ making the sonic space rather empty, but it gets more full as strings are first played in R1 and later in L1 of the ‘localized space’, slowly filling up the sonic space. The empty sonic space helps in creating some ambiguity in the music. There is hope, but it is frail and uncertain. This is boosted as well by the melody that teases the Shire theme, but never actually reaches to positive emotional outcome of this theme. The ‘spectral space’ distinguishes the music from the dark rumbles of the mountain and because of this it really stands out. Sam eventually tries to speak motivational words of hope towards Frodo. The same tin whistle we heard before plays the first notes of the Shire theme again. When Sam tries to motivate Frodo the music in the ‘morphological space’ is unstable and keeps changing. The sonic space broadens and thickens by the chorus in R2 and in the middle. The music and the sonic space change again when Frodo displays fear and distress but changes again when Sam shows his determination to get rid of the ring, once and for all. The music, in a major mode, spreads out again in the sonic space creating a very full sound. The sonic space enhances the ‘micro-emotive functions’ of the music. The changing ‘morphological space’ creates a lot of tension as it keeps developing in line with the portrayed mixed feeling of hope and despair. The music and the sonic spaces move towards a more intense and full sound mimics the feeling of hope and decisiveness that Sam shows by eventually even carrying Frodo up the mountain.

The last scene is also categorized by an unbalanced and constantly changing ‘morphological space.’ The music and sonic space heard when Frodo is holding the ring over the fires of Mount Doom creates a ‘micro-emotive function’ as the dissonant screeches of the strings create a sense of unease. Frodo is having doubts about destroying the ring while Sam cries out to just let the ring go. This moment of doubt is eventually underscored by the same kind of sound design that characterized Sam’s moment of doubt in giving the ring back to Frodo. It is as if the sound design

⁸² Julio d’Escriván, “Sound Art (?) on/in Film, “ In *Organised Sound* 14 no. 1 (2009): 71-72.

portrays a history of the ring when Sauron's whispers, heartbeats, angelic voices that are often linked to the Elves are scattered over the sonic space, constantly moving around creating a sense of motion. All these sounds serve as a 'denotative cognitive function' as it helps us understand again how strong the ring is in bending the mind of its carrier. It helps in portraying a personal psychological struggle for Frodo when Frodo doesn't have the willpower to destroy the ring.

Frodo's decision that the Ring is his, is immensely dramatized by the music and the sonic space. An intense chorus in a low c register and the pounding drums fill the sonic space giving this moment extra weight. Not only in the loudness and low and dark timbre of the chorus, also because the voices are placed on all sides of the sonic space creating a very saturated sound. Another particular moment in the sonic space is when Gollum captures the ring from Frodo. Gollum finally has his precious ring in his hand and looks at it with full joy. In this moment the music and the sonic space changes yet again. The wide sonic space is now completely decreased to an operatic voice in M0. The composition of the shot is completely focused on Gollum and the ring as well. The directness and poignant structure of the sonic space is mirrored in the shot. The music and sound production in this has a 'spatial-perceptive function' as the music helps in creating a strong focal point.

The sonic space however keeps evolving as do the actions on screen. As Gollum starts to dance of joy, the Ring theme is heard one last time in L2 of the 'localized space.' At this moment Frodo, who is placed on the left side of the frame while Gollum is placed on the right, is moving towards Gollum again to try and take back the ring. This sound production in this has a subtle 'spatial-perceptive function' as the music guides our attention to Frodo and shows where the next actions are coming from. The Ring theme however also has a 'denotative cognitive function' as it emphasizes the relation between the ring and the actions of the ring bearers, being consumed by its power. At this moment the sonic space is rather empty. This however changes when Frodo starts to fight with Gollum again for the ring. A loud chorus, brass and percussion join in the sonic space. The sonic space is completely filled again with sounds coming from all sides and with this building the emotional tension of the fight until they fall of the cliff together. Gollum has the ring, but ends up in the lava. The music calms down again and the sounds thin out when Frodo is hanging from the cliff over the fire. Sam tries to grab the hand of Frodo. Yet again music fills the entire sonic space when Frodo is ultimately saved by Sam. At the same time the ring melts in the fire and lava of Mount Doom meaning that Sauron is destroyed. The 'morphological space' in this last scene is

extremely unstable with no consistency. The music and sound production have a strong ‘compositional motivation’ for being used in this way as it tracks the actions on screen closely evoking different sense of mood and making different cognitive connections. The unfoldment of the narrative kicks the viewer around in the many emotions that it evokes, the music and its sound productions is there to emphasize this feeling. The sound production in particular tries to play on the different senses to boost the emotions that the actions in film is trying to conjure.

8. Conclusion

Sound production plays a role on various levels in the soundtrack of the *Lord of the Rings*. The majority of the time the sound production serves the music itself. In these cases the sonic space doesn’t touch on a specific ‘motivation’ or ‘function’ but is applied in a way to make the music that fulfills these roles as audible, clear and effective as desired. Too much variation in the sonic space might distract the viewer when the music isn’t the most important cinematic device, it works in combination with all other devices. The use of music however has the risk to be too monotonous when there is no variation in the sonic space which could decrease the filmic experience. There is an important distinction to be made in what the purpose of the music is, and what the purpose of sonic space is. With this a part of the research question is answered, it always plays a role to a certain degree. However, the sonic space is employed in more specific ways as well.

The sonic space in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy almost exclusively works on a ‘compositional motivated’ level because it is always related on a narrative level to what is happening on screen. Other specific ‘motivations’ of the sonic space haven’t been noticed in the analyzed scenes. It can be concluded that sound production seldom plays a role in the ‘realistically’, ‘transtextually’ and ‘artistically motivated’ workings of music in the trilogy.

There is a clear conclusion to be drawn considering the sonic space and the ‘functions’ of music. The way how a sonic space is constructed has effect on the ‘micro-emotive function’ of a scene as it has the possibility to sustain a mood through a balanced and consistent sonic space. It also has the possibility to enhance the rising tension in a scene when the sonic space transitions from a compact or empty sonic space towards a saturated or full one according to what happens in the film. Sonic space also plays a role in the ‘denotative cognitive functions’ of music. Not per se in its own right, but in making the music that has a ‘denotative cognitive function’ more of a striking and important element in the scene. At the same time it has been clear that a destabilized and

constantly developing and changing ‘morphological space’ has the functionality of tracking the actions, emotions and narrative development on screen.

The most striking role the sonic space can play however, is within the ‘spatial-perceptive function’ of music because of the prominent spatiality of sound in the sonic space. The placement of sound in the sonic space is a strong tool in directing the viewers and guiding them to the details and actions in the shot. The sonic space has the possibility to mirror the actions on screen and with this different music can be placed on either side to create a juxtaposition in the music that could be relevant to the shot and the narrative from which in turn it can influence the ‘cognitive function’ of music.

A limitation within the conclusions of this research is that it is not clear how timbre can function within the sonic space and how you can analyze this in relation to film. More research would be needed on the ‘motivations’ and ‘functions’ of timbre in film music as this is an extremely complex subject in film music in general and musicology in general because of the subjective nature of timbre. Something else that needs readdressing, is the fact that the researched material doesn’t have the same audiovisual quality as the medium for which it was conceived, as it was produced for the cinema. More valid conclusion could be drawn if a researcher has access to a cinema screening of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The sonic space has the possibility to play an important role in the film’s soundtrack when this is needed and functional. Mostly it has the power to be a specific filmic device in its ‘spatial-perceptive function.’ At other times the sonic space is a complementary component of the soundtrack as a whole, intrinsic to the sound production of the soundtrack.

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10. Filmography

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