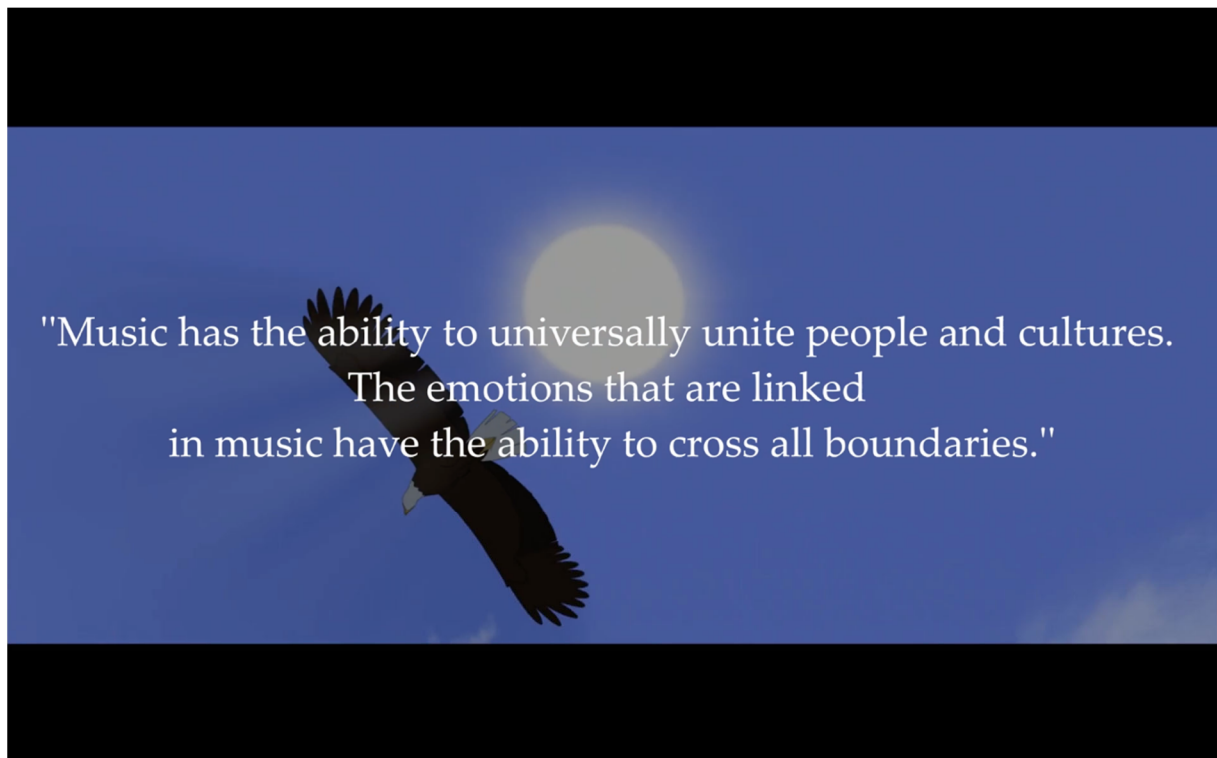


Music as a Dialogue: A Video Essay

Setareh Ghasemireza



In her video essay on the animated film Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron (2002), Setareh Ghasemireza explores the role of Hans Zimmer's music. Watch the video essay here: <https://flowcasts.uni-hannover.de/nodes/qkDgg>

Creator's Statement

Music is a complementary factor in cinema, as it helps track the storyline. Interestingly, music has also been used in animation films like in the first animated film *Disney's Steamboat Willie* (1928) with synchronized sound on picture. Since that time, it has been discovered that music in animated films allows children's audiences to understand the content of the plot. It helps create feelings of anger, pain, happiness, and so on through sounds and melodies.

Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron (2002), directed by Kelly Asbury and Lorna Cook, is one of those animated films that tell their story through music. Bryan Adams, the singer, and Hans Zimmer, the composer, created a masterpiece that turned *Spirit* into a memorable animated film. Colleen Cavanaugh states, “[c]omposer Hans Zimmer crossed the boundary between humans and animals by creating a score that evoked the emotion of a horse and made it something a human audience could relate to” (1). The audience can empathize with the protagonist through watching

the film because music transfers the protagonist's sorrow and happiness through rhythm and rhymes. The soundtrack of *Spirit* profoundly contributes to the story because there is little dialogue. It might seem that *Spirit* is an animated musical, but this is not accurate as the characters do not sing. Instead, the film is narrated by Bryan Adams's songs. That is, along with Hans Zimmer's tracks that play a significant role in conveying the emotions of a scene, Bryan Adams's tracks supplement the film's narration. Cavanaugh also writes that

in order to convey genuine emotions, the directors decided not to incorporate dialogue directly into the horse's character for a more realistic approach. Thus, the thoughts and emotions of Spirit are told only through the score and supported by minimal narration. This unique story-telling method challenged composer Hans Zimmer to make music not just to fill the sound but also to express the emotion and even the dialogue of the characters.
(1)

By making this video essay, I wanted to emphasize the importance of music in making an animated film memorable for audiences. This video essay shows that music is influential in delivering a message through melodies and song tracks. By editing together scenes of the film, I have tried to show how the audience can emotionally connect with the protagonist. Overall, this video essay allowed me to make my argument by showing related scenes of the film.

Author Biography

Setareh Ghasemireza (she/her) is currently working on her master's thesis in American Studies at Leibniz University Hannover (LUH). She completed her bachelor's degree in English literature and language in Iran. She has written five papers, including one on the political aspects of Martin Luther King's letter, another exploring the theoretical concept of Autofiction in Franz Kafka's novel, two additional articles focusing on the culture of 'cool' in film, and a philosophical paper about personal identity. Her master's thesis delves into the intersection of feminism in cinema and the portrayal of actresses as materialist icons. Her research interests focus on cultural studies in the broader realm of cinema.

Works Cited

- Cavanaugh, Colleen. "Spirit: Stallion of the Symphony." *ESSAI*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2017, <https://dc.cod.edu/essai/vol15/iss1/14/>.
- Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*. Directed by Kelly Asbury and Lorna Cook, music by Hans Zimmer, DreamWorks, 2002.