

Bryana Woodson
MUSC 224
November 2018

MUSC 224 Research Paper

When television and film were invented in the late 1800s, they were black and white and recorded without sound. It was not until 1927 that the first film with sound, a feature named *The Jazz Singer*, was developed and distributed for entertainment. Since then, the film industry has taken off and remains just as popular, if not more so, today - with box offices earning billions of dollars every weekend for one new release alone. As a student studying English in hopes of becoming a teacher, I am very connected and enthralled with the entertainment industry, as so many are. Book-to-movie adaptations have always been my favorite to watch, but I never particularly thought about the presence of music in films until this semester. The truth is, the music in a film affects the narrative just as much as the details in the story itself. Like costumes, sets, and actors, the music in a film is its very own character. One of my favorite stories has always been Jane Austen's 1813 social satire, *Pride and Prejudice*. I've read it a total of three times, twice in high school and once this semester for my ENGL 326 class. Over the past 200 years, the original novel has done exceedingly well. There are spin-off books, retellings, numerous film and TV adaptations, stage works, an Emmy-winning web series, etc. In

Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, my favorite adaptation of the original work, the composition "Darcy's Letter" by composer Dario Marianelli illustrates the power that music can have in transforming literature into other entertainment forums. Literature and music go hand-in-hand in that they both create a sense of storytelling for the audience. Marianelli's composition, truly all of his pieces in the film, add a great deal to the original plot through the four elements of music, as well as the use of atonal and tonal music and his particular usage of dissonance and consonance.

Dario Marianelli is an Italian musical composer who is actually pretty well known for working frequently with Wright. He studied piano and composition in Florence, Italy and London, England. According to his IMDb biography, "He has written orchestral music for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and the Britten-Pears Orchestra, as well as vocal music for the BBC Singers, incidental music for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and several ballet scores." One of his most successful film scores was, indeed, *Pride and Prejudice*. Marianelli was nominated for the 2006 Oscar for Best Original Score concerning this movie. Also, "this score won him the Classical Brit Award in the Soundtrack/ Musical Theatre Composer of The Year category and also earned him an Ivor Novello Award nomination," (IMDb). And he's received nominations and won many other awards for his detail to film scores.

Pride and Prejudice follows the Bennet family, a well-off middle class family living in Regency England. During this time, women did not have very many human rights at all and entails still hung over families without sons. This meant that, because the estate could not pass down to a female, it would be passed to the next of kin that was a male or sold outside of the family, and the women could potentially be thrown out of their own house. The Bennet family is one of those families lacking in a male heir, and the mother, Mrs. Bennet, is obsessed with finding her daughters advantageous marriages. This seems understandable, but Mrs. Bennet takes it way too far and ends up being a very laughable and offensive character overall. The author, Jane Austen, wrote the novel as a social satire of her own time, when women were forced to marry for advantage and looked down upon if they didn't marry because they weren't in love. Two of these characters include the eldest Bennet sisters, Elizabeth and Jane. Elizabeth turns down the first proposal of marriage she receives because she isn't in love and Jane is actually forced to wait for a little bit while the man she loves gets his act together and musters up the courage to propose. *Pride and Prejudice* is a form of the epistolary novel, meaning that it contains letters that aid the story along, and Marianelli's composition, "Darcy's Letter," happens to be one of those letters in the narrative. Darcy, or Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, is one of the main characters of the novel and perfectly illustrates the "pride" portion of Austen's title, as he originally comes across as a rich man who is stereotypically extremely pompous, conceited, and closed off. However, by the end of the

story, Elizabeth, the second eldest Bennet daughter who has judged him very harshly, begins to see the error of her ways through a letter he writes to her after she refuses his surprising proposal. The two have a very turbulent relationship in the novel until Mr. Darcy proposes and catches Elizabeth off guard then, after he writes the letter to explain some of the prejudices she's held against him, her feelings change and things ultimately end in "happily ever after." The composition entitled "Darcy's Letter" is played after Darcy has just proposed to Elizabeth and they get into an argument, where Elizabeth takes the time to accuse Darcy of some pretty harsh things. Mr. Darcy believes he then owes her an explanation and delivers a letter explaining himself to her the next morning. I particularly love how the director, Joe Wright, and the composer, Dario Marianelli, worked together to bring this scene to life. In the scene, Elizabeth has woken up for another day visiting her cousin's house. She's walking through the house when she stops to stare at her reflection in the mirror, up until this point the music remains somber and very low in volume. She remains staring in the mirror when Mr. Darcy comes to deliver his letter and the violin begins to increase in its prevalence against the piano. Elizabeth then snaps out of her seemingly enthralled trance, but only in enough time to see Darcy already back on his horse and starting to leave the house. As the music continues, there is a voice-over of Mr. Darcy's letter to Elizabeth. The volume of the musical composition remains at the same low volume, however, the pitch increases and decreases with the intensity of what's written in the letter. Throughout this particular piece, the four

elements of music - melody, harmony, rhythm, and tone color - are very prevalent and obvious.

Melody is defined as the “logical succession of musical pitches arranged in a rhythmic pattern,” (Sound Piper). The direction of the music starts with a frantic violin moving in a four-note group pattern that is repeated 20 or 30 times before the piano enters in a slower pace, where the notes are a bit more distant from one another than before (Arnold). Even though the melody is rather repetitive, if anything, that adds to the tone that listeners feel when they hear the piece. There is also a wide range present in the notes played on both piano and violin, and they are constantly going between low and high notes, which really rounds out the piece as a whole. As the beginning of the piece, intervals between the four-note groupings are barely present at all and give the illustration of a fast-paced horseback ride like Mr. Darcy riding to deliver his letter to Elizabeth. Then, as the piano enters, the intervals between notes are much more noticeable and the moments of silence add just as much to the composition as moments where the violin or piano seem to get worked up and forget to take a breath.

Harmony is defined as “vertical blocks of different tones that sound simultaneously,” (Sound Piper). The vertical structure, or the harmony, starts off largely in the background, as it is the second and more demure instrument to present itself in the piece. The horizontal structure, or the melody, is present in the violin that takes charge almost as soon as the piece begins. Both the vertical and horizontal structures or

instruments intersect and take turns being in the spotlight of the song, meaning that, depending on what part you're listening to, you'll either notice the piano more or you'll notice the violin more. The ebb and flow of the violin is especially beautiful to watch, even though the piano is the instrument that starts off at a slower, more peaceful pace. The building and facing of their notes offer a sense of protection and, while the song is mainly a somber piece to many listeners, it's very evident that Marianelli knew what he was doing when he sat down to compose this piece, it's almost as if the violin and piano are Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth's thoughts conversing with one another.

Rhythm is the "combination of long and short as well as even and uneven sounds that convey a sense of movement in the music," (Sound Piper). The rhythm is irregular in that, if you've never listened to the composition before, you can't always expect where the music will travel next - if it'll be a series of low notes on the piano or a frantic trill on the violin. However, once the listener really gets into the depth of the piece, the rhythm is easily noticed and you can begin to guess what it will sound like, especially once both instruments make their debut in the work. This piece is also heavy in consonance. It sounds very collective and is a beautiful piece that just sounds pretty and packaged very well, while other pieces in the movie have a bit more dissonance.

The tone color of the composition is, in majority, somber, although it is also largely peaceful. It's somber because of the situation; Mr. Darcy is leaving now that his proposal has been rejected, but he still feels that he owes something to Elizabeth, hence

the letter. However, it's peaceful and, because of that, bittersweet because Elizabeth is finally allowed a degree of closure for all the events and behaviors she's been speculating on the past couple of months. And there's some peace to be found in that. The unity between the violin and piano is beautiful and they seem to pull energy from one another as they both take the opportunity to shine in this piece.

Tonality also plays a major role in this composition. Tonality has to do with a scale of notes, cadence, and dissonance that crescendos into beautiful consonance. Tonal music is in a major or minor key and takes a journey somewhere, it isn't just random notes on a page. "Darcy's Letter" is minor key, specifically G minor. After the initial violin dissipates a little, the piano takes center stage and the key is more easily noticed. The G minor key adds to the somber feel of the song because it is lower than some other choices Marianelli could've used in the tonal scale.

Throughout this piece, Marianelli illustrates both Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth's characters as well as their current predicament. The four elements of music present in this piece help the listener to better understand it and, listening to just the piece without any visual from the film, they are able to get a sense of what the song would be about - it's about receiving and reading a letter that is a bit somber but offers explanation. Music is very important to storytelling, especially where pre-existing literature is concerned. People who've watched the 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* are then able to recollect the story in not just a literary universe but in a musical one as well, where the

music expresses the emotions and events present just as much as the words on the page do.

Citations

Arnold, Jeff. *Pride & Prejudice: Music from the Motion Picture Soundtrack*. Hal Leonard, 2006.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Modern Library, 2000. Originally published in January 1813.

Moggach, Deborah, and Jane Austen. *Pride & Prejudice*. StudioCanal and Working Title Films, 0AD.

“Pride and Prejudice.” *List of Books and Articles about Pride and Prejudice | Online Research Library: Questia*, 2018, www.questia.com/library/literature/fiction/novels/pride-and-prejudice.

Greene, John. “Pride and Prejudice Part 1.” Crash Course Literature #411. 6 Feb. 2018.

“Dario Marianelli.” *IMDb*, IMDb.com, www.imdb.com/name/nm0547050/bio.