



hallmark of film as an artistic medium. Because of its ability to so beautifully synthesize art forms, film can be thought of as a modern heir to the Wagnerian concept of Gesamtkunstwerk, or total art, and Shore's scoring for *Rings* is a paradigmatic illustration of the contribution that music makes toward film as total art.

In order to understand Shore's contribution to *Rings* as a piece of total art, we need to understand the philosophy behind using music to represent something. Pieces created following this practice are called programme music, a genre most thoroughly explored by the romantic composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Programme music is, very broadly, "Music of a narrative or descriptive kind" (Scruton), and it can best be understood insofar as it exists in dichotomy with absolute music. While there is some argument as to what are the exact definitions of programme and absolute music, we can name some paradigm examples: the tone poems of Liszt, Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, and Wagner's operas are all classic examples of programme music, music which seeks to represent some idea or narrative. Bach's *Art of the Fugue*, Haydn and Mozart's symphonies, and Brahms' concertos would all fall under the purview of absolute music, music that exists and is organized purely in accordance with musical ideas and conventions (Scruton).

The idea of programme music was codified by composer Franz Liszt and earns its name from his using a description in a program given to the audience members telling them how they should interpret the music they are about to hear. Though some later writers would go on to define programme music as including all music that is in any way related to some nonmusical object, Liszt's original usage of the term was meant to describe music which derived its internal logic from an outward source. Scruton elucidates, "Further, to follow Liszt's conception, programme music is music that seeks to be understood in terms of its programme; it derives its

movement and its logic from the subject it attempts to describe” (Scruton). A piece of music which merely imitates the sound of a birdcall would not be considered programmatic in this sense, but if the piece were divided into movements which represent the birds’ seasonal migration patterns, it would.

Film music is by its nature programmatic. Mervyn Cooke categorizes film music as “music contained within the action (known variously as diegetic, source, on-screen, intrinsic or realistic music), and background music amplifying the mood of the scene and/or explicating dramatic developments and aspects of character (termed extra-diegetic or extrinsic music, or underscoring)” (Cooke). Diegetic film music in particular embodies Liszt’s original idea to an almost ridiculo

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operas, ideologies, and anti-Semitism would be very influential on the Nazi party to follow him (Millington).

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In addition to synthesizing multiple artistic mediums necessary to Wagner's vision of total art, *Rings* also satisfies the condition of answering a certain communal need. Kristin Thompson's main thesis in *The Frodo Franchise* is that the fact that Jackson's *Rings* is a franchise and makes conscious choices for the purpose of achieving popular appeal does not diminish the artistic value of the films. Far from thinking that making films with such popular appeal robbed them of artistic integrity, Thompson states,

spirit of a total synthesis of artistic media than Wagner himself was in his own endeavors. After all, for all his talk of uniting all of art into one grand whole, the irony of Wagner's legacy is that he is remembered primarily for his music. The reason why dance is not typically included in film



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