Spring 2023

Natural Sympathies: An Examination of Music Interpreting Literature in Jane Eyre

William Currer Suggs
Bard College

Natural Sympathies:
An Examination of Music Interpreting Literature in *Jane Eyre*

Senior Project Submitted to

The Division of the Arts

of Bard College

by

William Currer Suggs

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2023

To Charlotte Brontë who was deprived of the opportunity of learning music.
I hope this does her justice.

Acknowledgements:

To my amazing advisors whom I cannot thank enough - Peter Laki, James Bagwell, and Deirdre d'Albertis. The three of you have saved my academic life time and time again. In my time at Bard, I have felt the most supported, encouraged, and inspired by your mentorship.

To The Library Crew: there is no possible way I could have accomplished this work without your camaraderie, your moral support, and our communal snacks. Our late nights were worth every second.

To all the friends I've made at Bard, you have welcomed me and made me feel like I am exactly where I am supposed to be.

To Rufus Müller, my first advisor and my first friend on campus. You already know.

To my mother. You pushed me to apply to Bard, to follow my passions and believe in my capabilities as an artist and academic. Through all our trials, you have never given up on me.
As high as the sky, as deep as the sea…

And to my best friend, my soup, my Moony, my parabatai…
Where would I be without you? You know I cannot put into words just how important you are to me, but I think "Whither thou goest, I will go" shall do.
Swack.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Story-telling is inherent to human beings. Our modes of communication have, throughout the course of history, expanded into art forms that reach our collective consciousness through the senses. Every artistic expression possesses the power to strike deep emotion, each with a unique power of their own, influencing one another; artists take inspiration from all mediums of expression. We have all at some point heard the expression, "A picture is worth 1000 words", but what of music? Music and literature in particular share a bond so different from any other combination of art. Literature has the advantage of engaging both sight and sound; it is, in itself, its own music with rhythm ingrained in its phrases, with symmetry as well as asymmetry in the structure of the text. However, it has been said by a rather notable nineteenth-century author that though literature, specifically poetry, has the capacity to be the food of love, "a good sonnet will starve [love] entirely away" if it is "only a slight, thin sort of inclination."[1] If one cannot come to appreciate a text, then there is no hope for the text to inspire deeper feelings. In contrast, written 200 years prior, is Shakespeare's insistence that music is the food of love.[2] Music often expresses so much of what cannot be written, what we cannot explain. It takes only one sound for one to lose themselves in another world. Each, of course, can stand alone, but when music and literature are put together, the stories they tell evoke some of the deepest feelings a human being is capable of.

[1] Austen, Jane. "Chapter 9." Essay. In *Pride and Prejudice*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 2020.

[2] Shakespeare, William. "Act 1 Scene 1." Essay. In *Twelfth Night* . S.l.: CREATESPACE INDEPENDENT P, 2017.

Take, for example, Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* based on the Shakespeare play of the same name, or Nikolai Rimsky-Korsokov's four movement symphony *Scheherazade* based on *The Arabian Nights*. The texts that inspired these works are, and have been, essential in the canon of classic literature. That they should be translated and interpreted through music only seems natural. If we go back to the origins of music, we find works by composers such as Hildegard Von Bingen, Pérotin, and Guillaume de Machaut; all wrote sacred music based on Christian liturgy. At least in western culture, music and literature have had a partnership lasting almost a millenia. With these qualities of the combination, reader, what could be better than diving into the works of Charlotte Brontë, who's emotional depth is so potent in her writing, and understanding the music that influenced her as well as the consequential music inspired by her creations? Charlotte and her younger sisters, Emily and Anne, all possessed the uncanny qualities of lyricism and musicality. It is no surprise that the Brontës' works are so often adapted to music of all genres. In Charlotte's poems and books, music appears in various ways, though the representation of music in her novel *Jane Eyre* seem to be overlooked; much musical discourse related to the Brontës favor Emily's work since she was the most capable musician of the family. But *Jane Eyre,* being such an impressive story that is both relatable in sympathy and yet so singular for its time, must be examined for its portrayal of what music symbolizes, the connection between Charlotte's literary influences and prominent composers of the early nineteenth century, and the music that would not exist today without *Jane Eyre.* My goal, reader, is to undertake this examination.

Chapter 1

"The Promise of a Smooth Career"

Jane Eyre is a story told from the perspective of an orphan left in the care of unwilling relatives who scorn and abuse her. She is sent to school at the age of ten and her situation at Lowood Institution does not begin auspiciously; Mr. Brocklehurst, the director and financier of the school, runs an unforgiving institution. The students were malnourished, given very little food that could hardly be described as nutritious. They face physical abuse should their behavior falter, they are given clothes unfit for the colder months, and the overall well-being of the students is not prioritized.

She finds consolation in the companionship of the angelic Helen Burns, another student, a beacon of piety and goodness, along with the superintendent Miss Temple who represents justice and good character. Helen and Miss Temple are the only true friends that Jane makes in all her time at Lowood, but after only six months since arriving, Helen dies of consumption. Over time, Jane becomes a teacher at sixteen, and after two years, Jane begins to feel stagnant and agitated. After deciding to seek a new occupation and advertising herself as a governess, she is hired to undertake the education of an eight-year-old French girl, Adèle. Her new employment brings her to a forbidding mansion, Thornfield Hall, that embodies all that a gothic mansion should be; battlements, winding thorn trees and all. Jane finds a comfortable companionship in the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax in her first months at Thornfield. There are strange things that occur in this house; at times, Jane can hear a disembodied laugh from the top floor that disturbs

her, though she overall finds pleasure in the novelty of her new position. Restlessness creeps upon her after three months, but a peculiar encounter takes place one night while she is out walking. A great dog runs past her, followed by a horse that slips on ice and falls in the road before her, the rider spraining his ankle in the crash. The gentleman, for Jane sees he is clearly a man of status, is brusque and rude, but Jane persists in seeing that he is aided until he is mounted once more on his horse and he gallops off, his dog following.

Jane learns when she returns to Thornfield that the traveler she has encountered on the road is, in fact, the master of the house: Edward Fairfax Rochester. Her first official meeting with him takes place the following night and he conducts a blunt, probing interview. It becomes clear to Jane that her employer is rather peculiar, and their next meeting further justifies that deduction. She is amused that he should care about her comfort under his employment or interested in her opinions, and in the weeks that ensue, he confides more and more in her. Their connection comes to a head when Jane, after waking in the night to that strange laugh, finds that there is a fire in Mr. Rochester's room; she douses the fire and saves his life. They share an intimate moment, Mr. Rochester passionately proclaims Jane to be his "cherished preserver", and Jane returns to her room completely bewildered and facing a torrent of emotion, the likes of which she has never felt.

She realizes that she is in love with Mr. Rochester, unaware that he, too, is quite in love with her. Believing him to be in love with a woman of status, Blanch Ingram, Jane is surprised to receive from him an offer of marriage. Naturally, she accepts, but on the day of the wedding, it is revealed that Rochester is already married, and his wife, mentally unstable and violent, has been locked away in the top story of Thornfield. This revelation gives explanation to the string of

mysterious events that took place over the course of Jane's residence. In the effort to escape the temptation of Rochester's pleas to stay with him outside of matrimony and keep to her sense of self, she flees Thornfield. Days are spent out in the wilderness before Jane is saved by a clergyman, St. John Rivers, and his sisters Mary and Diana, who turn out to be her paternal cousins. Jane spends a year with them, receives an offer of marriage from St. John which she does not accept, and after experiencing what could only be described as a spiritual experience, she finds her way back to Mr. Rochester. Jane happily informs us at the end of the novel, "Reader, I married him."[3]

The first edition of *Jane Eyre* was published October 16th, 1847 and sold out all 2,500 copies in the first three months of its publication. By April 1848, three editions had been published. Not only was it an immediate success, receiving a great deal of praise for its originality and vivid eloquence, but it also inspired much criticism and controversy. It was, indeed, a singular novel for its time, a story that transformed familiar tropes and concepts into something fresh, something new in style and sympathy. The subject matter combined gothic and romantic themes with elements of thrilling mystery and superstition. The identity of the author only added to the mystery the narrative effused. Even with a new name that implied masculine identity, the gender of *Jane Eyre*'s author was nevertheless questioned.

An anonymous review was printed a month after *Jane Eyre*'s publication in *The Era*, a London newspaper, which insisted, "It is no woman's writing… no woman *could have* penned 'The Autobiography of Jane Eyre.'"[4] Its passionate language was certainly unconventional, even considered inappropriate, for the heroine of a novel, let alone for a female author to pen the

---

[3] Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Edited by Stevie Davies. Pg. 517. UK: Penguin Random House, 2006.
[4] Anonymous. "Literature." *The Era*. November 14, 1847.
https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/review-of-jane-eyre-from-the-era.

words, and its unapologetic challenge against the circumstances of women and the system of class in England was equally assertive. A particular review entitled "The Last New Novel" printed unsigned in a women's periodical, *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, assumes the identity of the author being female, perhaps because the main character and narrator is a woman, and scorns the "authoress" for being as "bold and fearless" as was congruent with the critic's perception of what "the present generation desires":

> "Their boast is, that they dare to overstep 'conventional rules', and by conventional rules they mean all moral, religious, and social laws. To be bold is to be wise, and writing young ladies, instead of endeavouring to win upon us by their gentle manners, intellectual conversation, and polished mind, seek to dazzle us by their peculiar displays of disregard of all modest diffidence, and the reserve which is the chief charm of their sex."

The anonymous reviewer from *The Era*, though firm in their conviction of the author's gender, was not disturbed by the transgression of conventionalities:

> "The writer dives deep into human life, and possesses the gift of being able to write as he thinks and feels. There is a vigour in all he says, a power which fixes the reader's attention, and a charm about his 'style and diction' which fascinates while it edifies… The figures are not elaborately executed, but true, bold, well-defined, and full of life - struck off by an artist who embodies his imaginings in a touch."

Though the Romantic era had already reached its peak by the time *Jane Eyre* was published, it is clear that it set a new standard for artistic expression, a fresh way of giving voice to the human soul, that would inspire artists across all mediums.

Setting the Stage

An ideological shift was taking place in England regarding art and expression in the early to mid nineteenth century. By the time the Brontë siblings' works were being published, the shape of a commercial music industry as we know it today began to take form. It was the growing middle class that fostered further commercialization of music, being the majority of attendees at concerts all over the country. With this shift came the evolution of how we in western culture have perceived folk music. What had once been associated with the lower working class then started to become a symbol of the ambitions and congruence of the upper middle class.[5] A perceived want of connection to deeper emotion and that which is organic and original was overtaking the population. Romanticism was taking hold of the artistic world; it was a defiance against and the antithesis of its predecessor Neoclassicism. John Hennessy highlights the essential ideals of Romanticism in his book *Emily Jane Brontë and Her Music*; "Folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era were all relevant, along with an obsession with the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased and the satanic."[6] The combined works of the three Brontë sisters, as well as the works of their brother Branwell, embody many, if not all, of these qualities. Some of their literary influences were William Blake, Shakespeare, John Milton, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, whose drama *Die Räuber*, or The Robbers, is featured when it is read by the Rivers

[5] Scott, Derek B. "Music and Social Class in Victorian London." *Urban History,* vol. 29, no.1, 2002, pg. 60-73. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44613294.
[6] Hennessy, John. *Emily Jane Bronte and Her Music*. Layerthorpe, York: WK Publishing, 2018.

sisters in *Jane Eyre*. There is a distinct link in music between the Brontës and the poets of the early nineteenth century through Beethoven's compositions.

Beethoven found inspiration in Schiller's poetry, inserting a portion of "Ode to Joy" into the finale of his ninth symphony. As many composers of the early nineteenth century had, Beethoven had the admiration and great respect for the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, an idol in the growing Romantic movement. His poem *Erkönig*, Elf King, is most notably set to music by Franz Schubert. Beethoven's admiration led him to set Goethe's poems to much of his music; his opus 84, entitled *Egmont*, nine songs for soprano, narrator, and full orchestra, is set to the poem of the same name, and opus 112, *Meerestille und glücklich Fahrt*, which he dedicated to Goethe, are among the collection of settings. Much of Goethe's poetry embraces Gothic themes and aesthetics that the Brontë children were so intrigued by.[7] The subjects and themes of Goethe's poetry were those that the Brontë siblings would come to embrace themselves; nature, heartbreak, abandonment, and the examination of an individual's (and humanity's) place in existence.

There are many selections of music composed by Beethoven in the Brontës' music collection that survives today at the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth, Yorkshire, selections that fit specifically to Emily's tastes. There is a connection that has been analyzed between Emily and Beethoven in terms of their personalities, artistry, and styles among Brontë historians and enthusiasts. Robert K. Wallace's *Emily Brontë and Beethoven: Romantic Equilibrium in Fiction and Music* examines both individuals, and the congruence of their lives and their abilities in their respective crafts is quite striking.

---

[7] Ibid.

Music was frequently present in the Brontë childrens' upbringing. Branwell Brontë, the fourth Brontë child and immediate younger sibling to Charlotte, began playing the flute most likely at the end of 1831 and his song book shows us that his repertoire contained sacred music as well as secular music. Music was constant at the church in which their father, Patrick Brontë, was the appointed curate. The church had its own orchestra, and in March of 1834, an organ was installed, the occasion celebrated by a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. After this much anticipated addition, the church became a venue just as popular as the frequented halls in the region. Concerts were performed regularly, particularly by the Haworth Philharmonic Society, the "leading role in music in the village" at the time.[8]

The family resided not far from several towns in which music thrived. The Brontës had often attended concerts as Mr. Brontë was a lover of music.[9] The nearby town of Halifax had reputation enough to attract musicians from across Europe. Unfortunately, it is uncertain and cannot be proven due to a lack of evidence that the Brontës attended some of the most notable performances that took place in Halifax in the 1830s and early 1840s; however, given that Mr. Brontë was so enthusiastic about music, it is highly probable that they attended one or more of the following events: Paganini gave a performance in Halifax in February of 1832, Johann Strauss around 1838, and Franz Liszt in 1841. Felix Mendelssohn had several performances in Halifax as well courtesy of his artistic partnership with the Halifax Choral Society, founded in 1817. They premiered many of his compositions in England. Whether or not the Brontës attended any of these performances, it is undeniable that such occasions were influential just to

[8] Barker, Juliet. *The Brontës: Wild Genius on the Moors: The Story of Three Sisters*. Ch. 8. W W Norton & Co Inc, 2012.

[9] Ibid.

have them near and would have been discussed by admirers of music in the region. Where there are esteemed performances, concert-goers of varying characters and artistic expressions are sure to be as well.

Some time between the end of 1833 and the first half of 1834, an upright cabinet piano - not to be confused with a cottage piano which has smaller dimensions[10] - was purchased for the household, a significant installation considering the societal statement of owning a piano and the opportunities it would hold for the Brontë children. To have talent, taste and abilities in the arts of drawing and music was a true accomplishment for middle- and upper-class women in the nineteenth century and some of the only forms of expression that women were allowed. The presence of a piano in the home was the symbol of status, a statement that one was well-educated, accomplished, well-connected, and financially advantageous. The Brontë family was not wealthy; Mr. Brontë's income was only £200 a year (about £26,000 today) and the approximate cost of this piano for the parsonage based on a November 1831 advertisement for the sale of a "superior rosewood cabinet piano" brand new would have been around 90 guineas (approximately £12,300).[11] If the cost of the Brontës' piano was anywhere near such a price, there is no doubt he was granted financial help. Hennessy puts forth the possibility that the childrens' Aunt Branwell - their late mother's sister - godparents, or close friends of the family helped with the purchase. Barker suggests that Mr. Brontë purchased the piano on his own as it was "a considerably cheap one" and the price was probably not quite so high.[12]

Musical accomplishment was not used merely to get lost in the emotional intricacies of the art form, but as a device; an exhibition of talent and virtuosity as a certain way to advance

---

[10] Hennessy, *EJB and Her Music*.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Barker, *The Brontës*, ch. 8.

one's self in society, to display virtuousness and morality. In contrast, it was unfit and "not considered the correct thing for a gentleman to play piano", it being only acceptable for ladies or professional musicians - ironic that they were for most part, if not exclusively, men. Women were meant to be exceptional musicians, though propriety demanded that they remain amateurs.[13] There are contradicting accounts of Charlotte and whether or not she learned music at all. Due to her poor eye-sight and a fear that her posture would be negatively affected from hunching over too close to the music in order to read, it is known at least that she was strongly discouraged from playing and reading music. Winifred Gérin, renowned biographer of the Brontës, includes Charlotte when discussing the Brontë girls practicing music, saying "Charlotte and her sisters laboriously practic[ed]"[14] arias and overtures from operas by Bellini, Donizetti and Auber. Barker, however, references correspondence between Charlotte and friend of the Brontë sisters, Ellen Nussey, in which Charlotte talks about a potential position as a governess for a Mrs. Thomas Brooke. "[Mrs. Brooke] wants music and singing. I can't give her music and singing; so of course the negotiation is null and void."[15] Regardless of the degree of music education she received, if any at all, music was not amongst her many accomplishments. Her keen interest in the art form that was denied her might have influenced the evolution of lyricism in her writing, perhaps it invigorated a motivation to come as close to being musical as possible without touching an instrument or singing a tune. The most dedicated to music and most proficient player of the Brontë children was Emily; her playing "is said to have been singularly accurate, vivid,

---

[13] Burgan, Mary. "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *Victorian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1986).

[14] Gerin, Winifred. *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of a Genius*. Pg 52. London, UK: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

[15] Barker, *The Brontës*, ch. 12.

and full of fire."[16] Mr. Brontë would often call upon Emily, and Anne as well, to play for him in his study where the piano was placed upon its purchase. The family would have the pleasure of hearing Emily, Anne, or both filling the house with their favorite selections, perhaps even a fervent request from Charlotte or Mr. Brontë now and again.

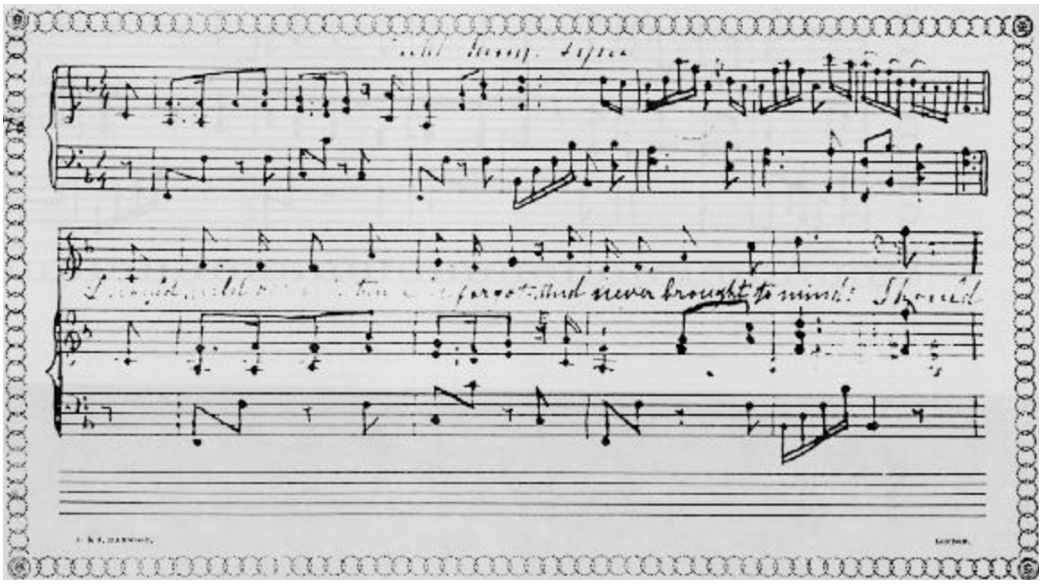
"You Must Have Music"

As aforementioned, reader, the collection of music held today in Haworth shows that Beethoven formed a substantial amount of Emily's repertoire, but the collection is vast and contains works of lesser known composers as well as prominent ones, all varying in difficulty. In the Haworth Collection, we see many works by Mozart and Handel in song books dated from the early to mid 1830s when Emily and Anne would have been taking lessons with their music tutor, Abraham Sunderland. In the family's copy of *The Musical Library - Instrumental Volume 3*, published 1836, Emily's markings can be found on the table of contents next to pieces by Beethoven ("a portion of" Pastoral Symphony and Variations on Paisiello's Air *Quanto e Bello*), Clementi (Sonata in E flat Op. 7, no.1,), Gluck (Religious March from *Alceste*), and Handel (Chorus, 'From the Censer' from *Solomon*). The *Invitation to the Dance* piano transcription composed by Carl Maria von Weber is found twice in Emily's music collection, a clear indication of her favor.[17]

There were a number of duets in the Brontë repertoire, an implication that Emily and Anne mostly likely played together as well as separately. Anne was the vocalist of the family;

[16] Hennessy, *EJB and Her Music*.
[17] Ibid.

many of the vocal pieces in the Brontë collection have her markings on them and half of her song book dated 1843/44 contains her simplified transcriptions of hymns. Compared to the bold, charged, and complicated pieces that were Emily's choice, Ellen Nussey describes Anne's preferences and quality of performance: "she preferred soft harmonies and vocal music. She sang a little; her voice was weak but very sweet in tone."[18]



Anne Brontë's transcription of "Auld Lang Syne"[19]

The significance of the above examination, reader, is in the knowledge of the proximity of siblings; living together, being educated together, and most importantly, creating art together. Though she did not possess a musical education, it would have been natural for Charlotte to associate the music she heard at home and at performances with her writing. After all, the Brontë children had been encouraged by their father to value and understand the unity of all the arts; he

[18] Ibid.
[19] "The Brontës and the Haworth Music Scene." In Search of Anne Brontë, February 22, 2019. http://www.annebronte.org/2017/06/11/the-brontes-and-the-haworth-music-scene/.

wished for his children to be exposed to "meetings of an elevated tendency" that would benefit them in their future endeavors.[20]

Charlotte and Emily were given the privilege of attending the Pensionnat Heger in Belgium in 1842 where Emily took music lessons to further her skills and the sisters were immersed in a bustling environment with broader access to concerts, operas, and other various artistic exhibitions. It is not unthinkable that Charlotte would have often had the company of Emily's music; being outcasts at the school for being Protestant, English foreigners, and much older than the other students enrolled meant that Charlotte and Emily were in near constant companionship.[21] As with the performances in Halifax, West Yorkshire, there is no way to know if either Emily or Charlotte attended concerts in Brussels as there is no evidence to confirm that they did, though it is certainly tempting to entertain the idea that the Brontë sisters might have, for example, seen Hector Berlioz conduct Weber's *Invitation to the Dance* in October of 1842. Charlotte's novel *Villette,* which is set in Brussels and heavily autobiographical, depicts scenes of the characters attending performances. Reader, assumptions are dangerous in cases like this, but to include an event similar to one she might have attended in her book would be consistent with Charlotte's formula of writing from personal experience.

The sisters were once again in close proximity to Franz Liszt when he performed at the Temple des Augustins with an orchestra directed by François-Joseph Fétis in July of 1842. This performance, and several others in the months that Emily and Charlotte spent in Brussels, included the works of Beethoven which would have certainly been attractive to both sisters. Wallace writes of a concert program from October of 1843 that was found in Emily's desk when

[20] Barker, *The Brontës*, ch. 8.
[21] Barker, *The Brontës*, ch. 14.

she died, a program that could have only been acquired by Charlotte as she was in Brussels on her own at that time, but it is not definitive evidence that Charlotte was present for that performance.[22] If there were any correspondences or diary pages that may have documented attendance to any of these occasions, they are lost to us; however, I will put forth again the significance of proximity. Along with general talk in the area amongst concert-goers, there would have been reviews of these performances in the newspapers for Emily and Charlotte to read. Of course, it is not the same sort of influence to read about a performance as it is to attend one, but the influence is present all the same.[23]

Brussels, and one man in particular, left a deep impression on Charlotte in terms of her growth as a writer and artist. Monsieur Constantin Heger, the husband of the school director Madame Claire Zoe Heger, was Charlotte's professor of literature and introduced her to new examples of literary style and cadence. Through her lessons with him, Charlotte found a way to create her own 'music' in the linguistic rhythm and tone that was original to her. As she and Emily made quick progress in their studies, Monsieur Heger began giving them advanced lessons. Barker gives a brief description of Heger's teaching style; "[he would] read them some of the finest passages from French literature, discuss and analyse them together and then get the sisters to reproduce their own thoughts in a similar style."[24] Though Emily did not embrace this method, Charlotte learned much from it, though she maintained reservations for as long as she took these lessons. In mimicking the style of writers such as Alexandre Soumet and Victor Hugo, she developed a lyricism in her language that at once captures rich detail of the subject and

---

[22] Wallace, Robert K. *Emily Bronte and Beethoven: Romantic Equilibrium in Fiction and Music*. Pg. 166. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

[23] Hennessy, *EJB and Her Music*.
[24] Barker, *The Brontës*, ch. 14.

paints it before the minds' eye. She writes as she speaks, her voice clear and unmistakable: "A splendid Midsummer shone over England: skies so pure, suns so radiant as were then seen in long succession, seldom favour, even singly, our wave-girt land."[25]

Her prose on nature and sensation, both physical and emotional, captures the bystander. The language becomes the instrument and the reader plays; "... my step is stayed - not by sound, not by sight, but once more by a warning fragrance. Sweet-briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink, and rose have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense: this new scent is neither of shrub nor flower; it is - I know it well - it is Mr. Rochester's cigar."[26] Charlotte might not have had the abilities to play piano or sing, but it is clear that her works hold the influences of poetry and music intertwined. At the start of chapter 33 in *Jane Eyre* while a storm rages outside her cottage, Jane chooses *Marmion* by Sir Walter Scott to aid her introspection, and enraptured in the pulse of poetry, she shares with the reader, "I soon forgot storm in music";[27] a small but very telling insight into her belief in poetry and music as being one and the same.

The essence of Charlotte Brontë's perspective on the facets of the arts in her time is shown clearly in the subjects of her work. One scene in *Jane Eyre* gives some insight into what music symbolized by the 1840s and the way it was used to define character. In chapter 17, the reader is introduced to a group of new characters, one being Blanche Ingram who is a caricature of a woman of status in the Victorian era - accomplished, but superficial; well educated, but possessing no depth of intelligence; fashionable, but pompous and gaudy. Jane is forced to sit through a severe criticism of governesses and the general degradation of those in similar

---

[25] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pg. 286.

[26] Ibid. pg. 287.
[27] Ibid. pg. 435.

positions to herself, brought to a close by Miss Ingram's approach to the piano. She speaks as she plays the introduction to a song - flaunting her skill and proficiency - dwelling upon the subject of true masculinity and the qualities that all men should possess; "...as if a man had anything to do with beauty!... let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour: let their motto be - hunt, shoot, and fight: the rest is not worth a fillip. Such should be my device, were I a man."[28]

Contradictory that she should be professing these virtues of the ideal man, for immediately before and after the proclamation, she entreats Mr. Rochester to sing to her accompaniment. Blanche approaches the instrument again in chapter 18 when Rochester is absent from the house and all the guests of Thornfield are left to their own devices without their social leader. Jane says that Blanche "murmurs over some sentimental tunes and airs on the piano," with a tone of sarcasm, the continuation of Jane's commentary insinuates that Blanche's design is to display herself to advantage above others. In contrast, Rochester's performances are described with reverence and admiration; "...the tones that then severed the air arrested me… a mellow, powerful bass, into which he threw his own feeling, his own force; finding a way through the ear to the heart, and there waking sensation strangely."[29] Of course, Jane, the narrator, is biased in her estimation, though this sequence is proof of Charlotte Brontë's consciousness as to the effect of authentic expression of the self through art form, that there is a clear difference between the expectation of performance and what could be found within when one reaches beyond. Rochester possesses deeper, more intricate feelings in Jane's eyes, therefore his musicality represents whatever purity is left of him. Alison Byerly analyzed this scene and

[28] Ibid. pg. 208.
[29] Ibid. pg. 209.

what this display tells us about Charlotte Bronte as a writer: "even music, the most authentic of the Romantic arts, is included in Brontë's classification of all arts as potentially deceptive."[30]

With the arts being a natural expression of beauty and always considered as such, Rochester's character is presented to the reader from a new perspective. Up until this point in the book, he has proven himself to be ironical, sarcastic, and he has a peculiar way of speaking, often referencing works of classical antiquity. The reader is informed through a conversation Jane has with Mrs. Fairfax that he is a very skilled musician. Charlotte directly associates Rochester with Romanticism by giving him literary and artistic sensibility beyond the conventional. Though he has transgressed and defied moral order, there is a depth to his soul that is undeniable. The same can be said for Emily's Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*; these characters were the sisters' examination of the soul beyond order or transgression. The emphasis on these qualities reveals Charlotte's formula for what traits should be esteemed in one's character, what qualities are desirable, and what makes someone truly accomplished. In Charlotte's world, music could be appropriated as a device for the extravagant, the superficial and the facetious, yet simultaneously it was a significant indicator to one's depth of sensibility and intelligence, exemplified by Rochester's performance on the night after his and Jane's engagement.[31]

---

[30] Byerly, *Realism.*

[31] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pg. 312-314.

"To Live, Rise, and Reign At Last"

The connection between the Brontës and music, as both an artform and a way to write about the emotional landscape of their characters, is nothing without calling to attention that from an early age the siblings aspired to be artists themselves. As early as 1826, the children were inventing their own imaginary worlds and characters. They were encouraged to read political newspapers associated with both the Tory and Whig parties in order to "recognize political bias and see the arguments from both ends of the spectrum."[32] The Duke of Wellington was one of the largest, if not the central object, of their inspirations, arguably for Charlotte more so than the others. The story-telling began in earnest when Mr. Brontë gifted Branwell with a box of toy soldiers; each sibling claimed one for their own. Branwell's story "History of the Young Men" records the backgrounds of each of the sibling's characters which these toys inspired. Mr. Brontë was cognizant of his childrens' favorite pastime and, always the nurturer of their artistic growth, encouraged them to write as much as they wished, though not without reminders to write outside of their secret worlds.[33]

The childrens' writing skills only accelerated as they grew older, and still using their imaginary worlds as ground work, they expanded to include poetry in the mix with their fictional stories. Charlotte, having stumbled upon some of Emily's poetry, made the suggestion to her sisters that they publish a collection of their poems. It was agreed to, though Emily and Anne's condition was that they all use pseudonyms in order to escape the prejudices against their gender;

[32] Barker, *The Brontës*, ch. 4.
[33] Ibid. ch. 8.

in using masculine names, they believed they had a better chance of having their work taken seriously. Their new names matched their initials, each adopting the last name Bell; Charlotte became Currer, Emily became Ellis, and Anne became Acton. The collection, entitled simply *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, was published in May of 1846.

That summer, the Brontë siblings sent out the manuscripts of their first novels - *Agnes Grey*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *The Professor* - in the hopes that they might have more luck with publication than they did with *Poems*. The manuscripts circulated from publisher to publisher with little success until *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were at long last accepted to be published in early 1847. Emily and Anne agreed to the offer despite undesirable terms in which they would have to fund their own publication. Charlotte, having sent out *The Professor* six times, was in danger of falling into complete dejection, though ever resilient, her seventh attempt would prove to be worth her efforts.

She received a mixed, but promising reply from Smith, Elder & Co., a small London publishing house. Though the readers at Smith, Elder thought *The Professor* to be well written, they did not believe it would be successful. Their interest in Charlotte's work, however, was piqued and they requested that she submit to them a new narrative in three volumes. By this time, Charlotte had been writing *Jane Eyre* for almost a year. She began writing when she accompanied her father to Manchester in the summer of 1846. Mr. Brontë's eyesight had been progressively deteriorating and it became imperative to undergo an cataract operation. The surgery took place on the 24th of August, and in order to recover properly with the lowest risk of infection and best possibility for successful result, Mr. Brontë was required to lie in a dark room, eyes covered, for one month. Charlotte was left with a great deal of time on her hands, and

having already conjured some of the ideas that would be in the novel in manuscripts of previous years, she expanded upon them and brought the concepts to life.

She recognized and understood that the best qualities of *The Professor* were the scenes and ideas that were largely autobiographical. Characters were inspired by people Charlotte had known in her life, as well as the imaginary personalities she had invented in the juvenilia she and her siblings wrote in childhood. Rochester is essentially a recreation of her early recurring hero, the Duke of Zamorna, who was just one iteration of many, born of the childrens' early "hero-worship" of war heroes and political figures.[34] These imaginary characters' personalities were the foundational material that made Rochester: "his pride and sarcastic wit, his string of past mistresses, illegitimate child and overwhelming attractiveness to women." The only thing that differed between Rochester and his predecessors was that Rochester was not handsome, in fact, Jane agrees with his description of himself as "a Vulcan", referring to the Roman deity of fire and metalworking, when comparing himself to the "Apollo" in Jane's description of St. John Rivers' "Grecian profile."[35] Rochester acquired the physical resemblance more congruent to that of Monsieur Heger, as well as Heger's disagreeable temper. With such a caustic character that fits the Byronic hero mold so wonderfully, featured in a story that is so enticingly morbid yet beautiful in its own way, it was sure to inspire composers in the same way Beethoven was inspired by Schiller and Goethe. Such examples as Beethoven's interpretations of literature left their mark on the Brontë siblings, for there is no challenge like describing the musical qualities of life, and the Brontës were certainly always doing their best to challenge themselves. The following adaptations are the reverberations of Charlotte's legendary novel.

---

[34] Ibid. ch. 4.
[35] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pg. 508.

Chapter 2

Film music composers' works of the early to mid twentieth century often fit into the romantic genre. Perhaps the most famous name of this time is Bernard Herrmann, known for his incredible motivic scores. His compositions possessed qualities of uncertainty and eeriness, fitting well within the gothic and horror aesthetics that were the essence of some of his most successful projects like *Vertigo* and *Psycho*. An avid admirer of Richard Wagner, the influence of the German composer's work is strikingly recognizable in Herrmann's music. As with many composers of Herrmann's time, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, based on the Celtic legend that inspired Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, was a significant inspiration in setting a new standard for harmonic vocabulary. Andy Hill, author of *Scoring the Screen: The Secret Language of Film Music*, recognizes the attributes that makes Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* so appealing; "Its fervent chromaticism, always reach[es] but never quite grasp[s] the object of its desire."[36] The Tristan chord in particular, the first chord to appear in the opera, is a clear basis for the sound associated with Bernard Herrmann. The Tristan chord, recognized specifically as a French sixth spelled F - B- D# - A with an appoggiatura from G# to A, is in short a misspelled half diminished seventh chord — a chord that presents itself one way, but must be understood in another, very much like the misunderstood Byronic hero. It is not surprising that someone "who considered himself… an expert on the subject of unrequited love" gravitated toward this

[36] Hill, Andrew Warren. "From Among the Dead: Bernard Herrmann's Vertigo." Essay. In *Scoring the Screen: The Secret Language of Film Music*, pg. 6. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2017.

particular sound. Though it would be incorporated quite frequently later on in his career, glimpses of that unmistakable half-diminished seventh chord are dispersed throughout his works in his early career as well.

> "As a composer I might class myself as a Neo-Romantic, inasmuch as I have always regarded music as a highly personal and emotional form of expression. I like to write music which takes its inspiration from poetry, art and nature. I do not care for purely decorative music. Although I am in sympathy with modern idioms, I abhor music which attempts nothing more than the illustration of a stylistic fad. And in using modern techniques, I have tried at all times to subjugate them to a larger idea or a grander human feeling." Bernard Herrmann to Edward Johnson 1977[37]

Orson Welles was cast in *Jane Eyre* to play the enigmatic and changeable Edward Fairfax Rochester and soon "claim[ed] control" over the writing process as well as "other domains of [the] production."[38] Having formed a collaborative partnership with Bernard Herrmann in the late 1930s working together on several radio shows, Welles expressed the wish to producer David Selznick to hire Herrmann to compose the score. There was no resistance on Selznick's part; he, too, wanted Herrmann on the project for the score and included the request in correspondence with Twentieth Century Fox vice president William Goetz regarding the film.[39] Hence, Herrmann was hired to compose his fourth film score. Already familiar with the works of the Brontë sisters, Herrmann's involvement in *Jane Eyre* inspired a deep obsession with their writings and the commencement of composing his first and only opera *Wuthering Heights* which

---

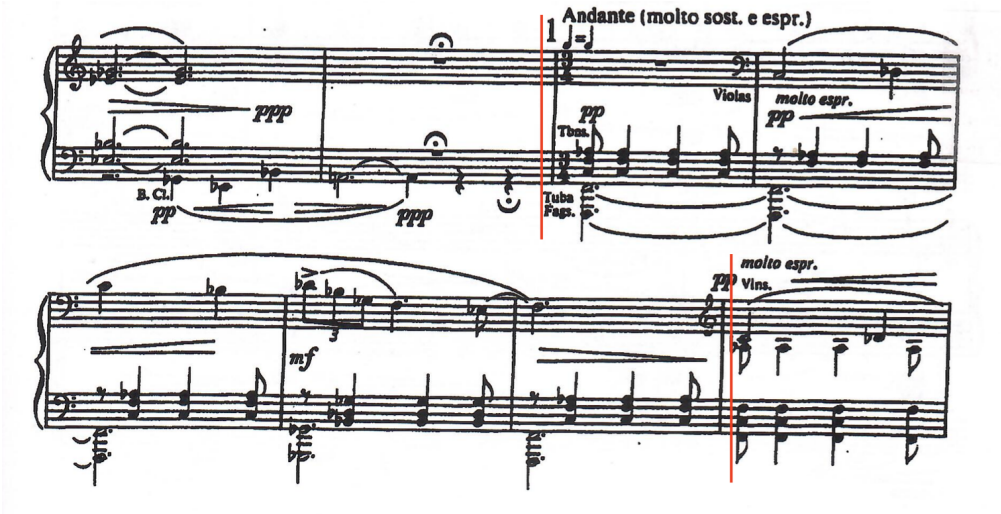
[37] Johnson, Edward. "Bernard Herrmann: A Biographical Sketch." The Bernard Herrmann Society, 2011. http://www.bernardherrmann.org/articles/biographical-sketch/.

[38] *Jane Eyre*. Bernard Herrmann, Adriano, Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra. Marco Polo Film Music Classics 8.223535, 1994, CD.

[39] Selznick, David O. *Memo from David O. Selznick*. Edited by Rudy Behlmer. Pg. 314. New York, NY: The Viking Press, Inc., 1972.

debuted in 1950. Having such intimacy with the Brontë sisters' writing, he was able to compose something that spoke of the text of *Jane Eyre* beyond dialogue and narrated description. The entirety of the score is built on motifs drawn from Romantic music, a foundation for the career he would develop in film composition.

Passion



An excerpt from Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* Prelude in Act 4.

The prelude during the opening credits of the film begins with this theme; the establishment of what this story will be about and the nature of the narrative. There is immediate disquiet in the entrance of the brass section with their arresting syncopation and accentuated swells, the addition of the strings sorrowful, as if to speak for every struggle Jane endures throughout the narrative. Her voice as a child is heard in the cry; "...if others don't love me, I would rather die than live - I cannot bear to be solitary and hated."[40] As the strings climb, so does Jane's sense of self-reliance which remains strong even in the gravest moments; "*I* care for

[40] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pg. 82.

myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself."[41] She is strong, but her pain is nonetheless palpable, demonstrated by the progression of i - ii⌀ - i in the key of f minor. But accompanied by Jane's sentiments is Rochester's. As you will see in the next section, Rochester's theme contains the same four notes as the Passion theme (though his motif is transposed to a minor). The frustration of his woe "Whatever I do with this cage, I cannot get at it - the savage, beautiful creature!"[42] wails through the strings toward the end of the section and, reflecting what will be heard in his own motif, his desperate sobs, "Oh Jane! my hope - my love - my life!"[43] have the final say in the descent to a minor seventh. The Passion motif stays consistent throughout the entirety of the score; any variation does not stray too far from its origin.

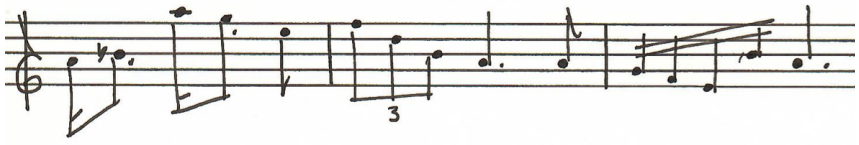
Rochester

Rochester's theme holds all the description of his character as shown in the book. Mr. Welles portrays elements of Rochester's character - the sarcastic and abrupt manner of speaking, his general air of mystery and acute masculinity - but it is Herrmann's score which rounds out the full context of Rochester's character, taking into account the text of the book beyond the attributes chosen to be represented in the adaptation. Not only is the melody abrupt, but it is "changeful", to use Jane's own words to describe her eccentric employer. Its introduction is as jarring as Rochester's sudden appearance on his horse in the fog. The unsettling and punctual first four notes - an ascending minor second and major seventh followed by a descending minor

[41] Ibid. pg. 365.
[42] Ibid. pg. 366.
[43] Ibid. pg. 367.

second - ensnares the audience's attention. The continuation of the progression accentuates Rochester's flippant, discourteous and brusque manner in his initial meeting with Jane, as well as aspects of his behavior throughout the narrative.

However, the sonic assault is interrupted by a progression a reassuring major chord, insisting that there is something within him that deserves sympathy, that his behavior is not "naturally vicious"[44] as he tells Jane during their second rencontre (or third, if you choose to count their initial meeting). It is a brief moment where one could be convinced that he is capable of living nobly, or, at the very least, it is his intention, but he himself admits "...since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I *will* get it, cost what it may."[45] Any hope of stainless reformation disappears. Suspicion returns as the progression reverts back to foreboding uncertainty; what sort of resolution will follow? What are his limits to obtain the pleasure which is so intoxicating that he reverently describes it as "sweet and fresh as the wild honey the bee gathers on the moor"?[46] It is clear it must not end with ease; his doom, the certainty of his destruction - raucous, severe brass - teeters on top of a chromatic descent before it stumbles, tripping into an oppressive rush to his lowest point. As with the Passion motif, Rochester's theme has little variation where it is featured and is often paired with the Passion motif, blending with one another, almost becoming one in the same.

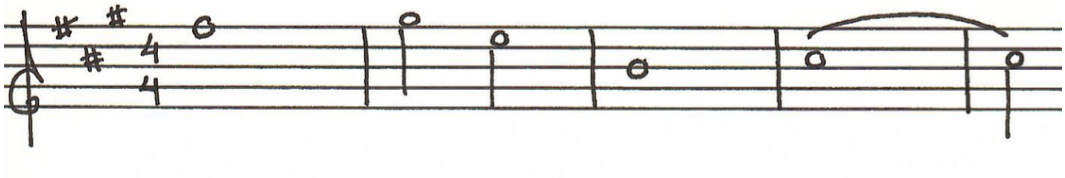


A transcription of Rochester's motif.

[44] Ibid. pg. 162.
[45] Ibid. pg. 160.
[46] Ibid.

Jane

Jane's voice, her theme, is characterized by the oboe. Established in A major, its introduction is sweet and curious, lilting over gentle ascending arpeggios on the harp and a sustained vi7 chord played by the strings section, until it all resolves, like a sigh, on I. The major seventh integrated with the tonic triad suggests Jane's character is not as simple as we might think, inexperienced and "plain" as she is (Joan Fontaine, who played our heroine, is far from plain, reader; but of course, it is Charlotte Brontë's text to which we are relating the music discussed). The following half diminished seventh chord is Jane's "obscure" trait, resolving again to I. The progression pulls the ear in; she is not so obscure that she cannot be understood, and the progression contains a friendly dissonance, more intriguing than obscure. She is passionate in all that she feels, as the melody tells us, but she is firm in principle and belief, however light and aerial the sound might be.



A transcription of Jane's motif.

The theme is first heard in the context of the narrative the first time we see Jane. She is only a child, therefore the theme is straightforward and quiet, just as she is forced to be by her family. As Jane grows and finds herself in new places surrounded by new faces, so does the theme. The more she experiences and the more complicated her feelings become, the theme

expands and several variations narrate different emotional settings, similar to the way Wagner utilized his motifs. A secondary recurring theme for Jane appears in moments of intimacy between Jane and Rochester, though it is not a hopeful or reassuring intimacy. It is the melancholy of a love believed to be unrequited, the pain of being unable to act upon one's own feelings because of impediments that could be inconsequential, though custom would not allow for that freedom. Herrmann's familiarity with the text makes his score all the more striking. Jane's yearning is so pungent; sound painting at its finest. The variation below calls back to Jane's deep affection; "Instead of wishing to shun, I longed only to dare - to divine it."[47]

A transcription of Jane's secondary motif.

Glimpses of Mr. Rochester's tenderness toward Jane is exhibited through an extension of this secondary theme. It contains the same emotional tone, though it is the slight differences in orchestration that informs the audience of Mr. Rochester's own yearning that is then intertwined with Jane's. After Jane saves him from the fire that nearly takes his life, Mr. Rochester expresses his gratitude with unmistakable passion; "I knew you would do me good in some way, at some time."[48] The orchestra accompanies the theme played by the violins, the brass subtle but representing Mr. Rochester's particular brand of masculine passion that so unsettles Jane; "Till morning dawned I was tossed on a buoyant but unquiet sea, where billows of trouble rolled

[47] Ibid. pg. 218.
[48] Ibid. pg. 177.

under surges of joy."[49] In another instance where Jane finds herself alone with Mr. Rochester, there is more restraint in the orchestra under the theme in contrast to the moment mentioned above. She had believed she had gained more than just Mr. Rochester's approval, but always a rational being, Jane attempts to reign in her emotions and let practicality rule. The melody is as straining as ever, but the orchestra fades in and out as emotions try to claim mastery. The brass is not as subtle, accentuating the absence of Mr. Rochester's attention; "I distinctly behold his figure, and I inevitably recall the moment when I last saw it… How near had I approached him in that moment! What had occurred since, calculated to change his and my relative positions? Yet now, how distant, how far estranged we were!"[50] Herrmann's use of minor and major seventh invokes such depth of sympathy as to connect the text to the film, to include that which is not represented on screen.

Chapter 3

Where Bernard Herrmann uses conventional western musical devices to depict Jane's story, composer Nils Vigeland takes a neoromantic approach. There is no doubt of the romantic identity of his opera, but modern elements add complexity to the interpretation of the narrative. Reading classic literature can sometimes be like trying to read a different language, and though intimidating at times, there's much more to relate to and understand once one becomes familiar with style, structure and cadence. The same sentiments can be applied to understanding Vigeland's interpretation of *Jane Eyre*.

---

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid. pg. 202.

The opera was commissioned by The English National Opera and premiered in London in July of 1992.[51] The two scene production runs about 45 minutes and depicts two climactic moments in the story; the confrontation that takes place after the truth of Mr. Rochester's existing marriage is revealed, and Jane's return to Mr. Rochester at the end of the novel. This adaptation, refreshingly, is almost entirely text directly from the novel, with small adjustments for the sake of fitting the music and the text together in a way that does not interrupt the flow of the composition, as well as only including parts of the text that is strictly necessary to convey the substance of the plot; enough that admirers of the book would be satisfied with what is included, understanding that the music itself helps to fill the space between the lines, and enough to keep those unfamiliar with the book engaged.

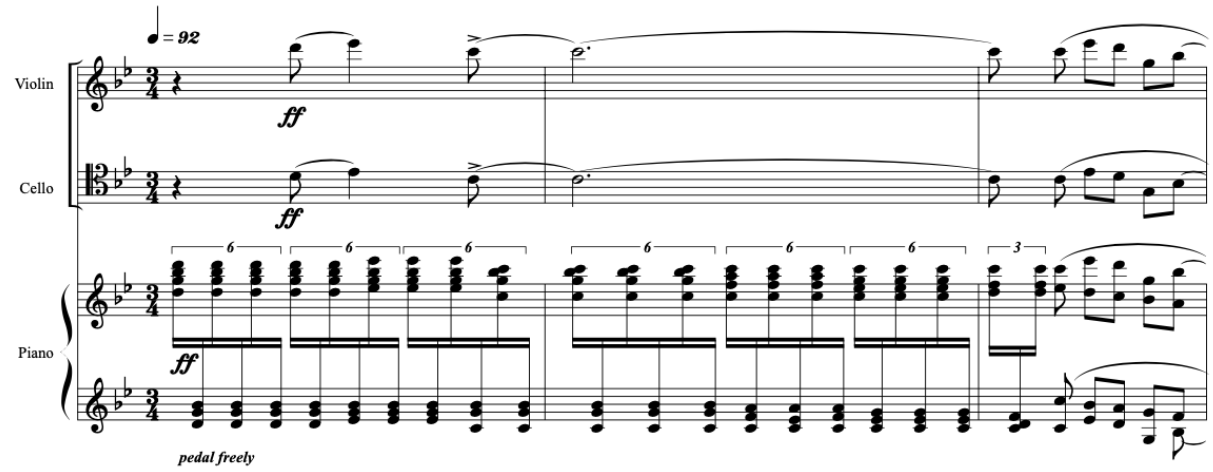
Scene 1: False Love

False Love depicts the bulk of the confrontation in chapter 27 on the evening of the failed wedding. The text in the book sets a space of solemn introspection, Jane's narration relating her painful resolution that she must leave Thornfield behind. She is weak with exhaustion, the exertion of intense emotion having taken its toll upon her body, and it is all made worse by hunger. In reading the first passage of the chapter, the silence that Jane has been subjected to is palpable. The space is still, uninterrupted by outsiders coming to comfort her or check in on her. The emptiness is made tangible with Jane's thought said aloud to herself, "Friends always forget those whom fortune forsakes."[52] Vigeland embodies not the silence or desolation of the moment,

[51] "False Love/True Love." Nils Vigeland, 2021. https://www.nilsvigeland.com/catalog/false-love-true-love.

[52] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pg. 344.

but the riotous state of Jane's and Rochester's emotions. Because the first scene of the opera is sung mostly by Rochester, the music tends to reflect more of his state of mind, his behavior, and his story more than Jane's.



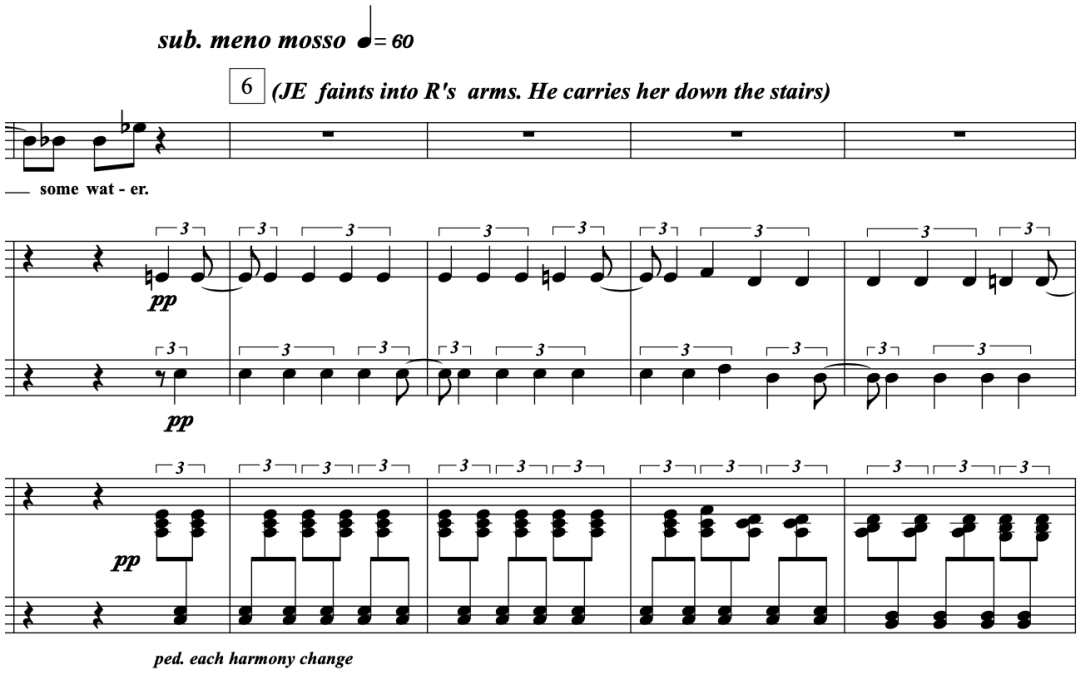
An excerpt of the False Love motif from Nils Vigeland's *False Love/True Love*.

The motif of False Love begins the scene with vigor, a clear chordal progression that fits romantic convention, melodramatic in a way that is consistent with romantic expression, but with modern elements of, as Kyle Gann wrote of Vigeland's music in general, "rhythmic precision, which leads to tricky polyrhythms and interplay of rhythmic motives."[53] Rochester sings the motif with insistence and underlying urgency. It is no matter that parts of his dialogue from the book are excluded from the opera; those sentiments are represented in the character of the music. The impatience Rochester had been feeling sitting outside of Jane's room and waiting for her to emerge is clear in the rhythmic pattern of the melody and the interchanging of large and small intervals. As with Herrmann, Vigeland provides a visceral musical representation of Mr.

[53] Gann, Kyle. "Nils Vigeland." *Chamber Music*, March 2010. https://www.kylegann.com/AmericanComposer.html.

Rochester's changeful and abrupt behavior, exaggerated by his terror of losing Jane, of having deceived her and facing the inevitability that she will leave him (but of course, he is in severe denial and does all he can to stall what must come). The brief harmonic clarity devolves with changes in meter and key, conventional chord progressions done away with. Within the first minute or so, the meter changes six times; the key signature changes thrice in that same span of time. I will note, reader, that while it is not necessary to discuss every individual instance, it should be known that the entirety of this score is riddled with meter and key signature changes.

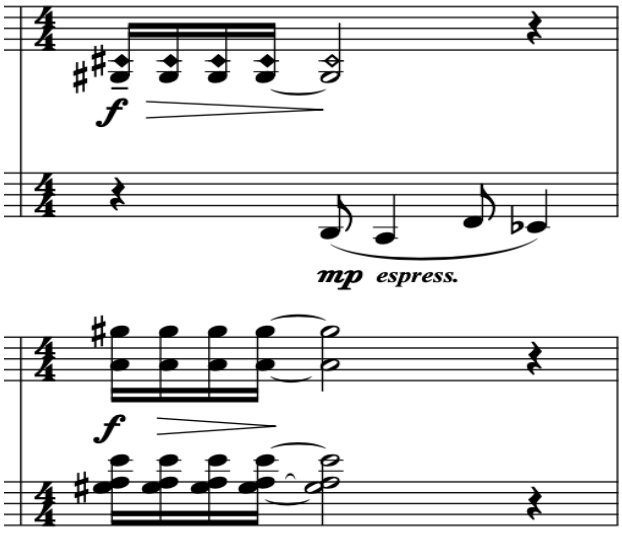
It is inescapable in the human experience to feel dreadful impatience in the midst of a predicament unresolved, to be caught in the middle of emotional confrontation born of deceit and manipulation - if you *have* been able to avoid such a circumstance, reader, I congratulate you. For the unfortunate masses who know the feeling all too well, Vigeland's composition will inspire such sympathies, at times creating a sound painting so unsettling that it is impossible not to hear Charlotte's vivid and poetic descriptions of dejection.



A variation of the False Love motif.

Though neither voice is heard during this brief interlude between sections shown above, this lamenting iteration of the False Love motif speaks for Jane's inner monologue, broken and desolate; "If I could go out of life now, without too sharp a pang, it would be well for me… then I should not have to make the effort of cracking my heart-strings in rending them from among Mr. Rochester's."[54] Those heart-strings, strained and plucked with torturous truth, manifest in a rhythmic motif, included in both scenes, most often heard between statements and sections. The first iteration precedes Mr. Rochester's explanation of his history relating to the circumstances of his marriage, building the anticipation for Jane and the listener, waiting to learn the whole truth of his past. It is a hesitant question, portraying shame and a lack of confidence when paired with a change in tempo.

[54] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, pg. 345.

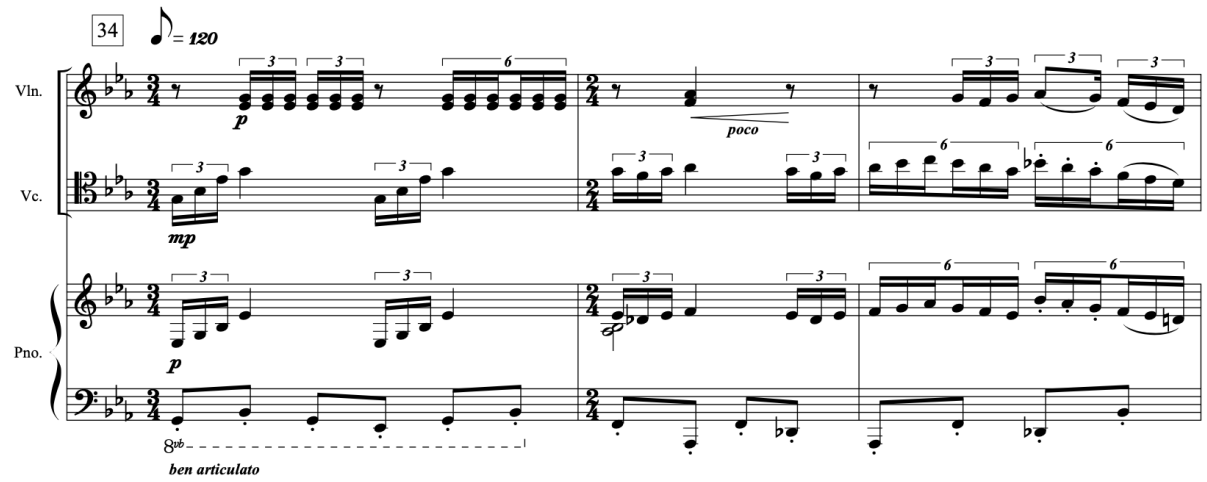


The rhythmic motif of *False Love/True Love.*

Scene 2: True Love

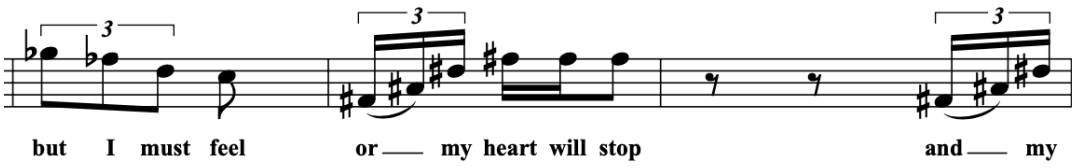
True Love, which uses the text of chapter 37 as well as a sentence or two from chapter 28, begins with a theme that is quite the antithesis of False Love. Where False Love began with elongated trembling, almost abrasive force at fortissimo, True Love is up tempo and marked mezzo piano with a playful rhythm. Of the three examples of adaptations I will have given you by the conclusion, reader, this might be the only one in which there is justice for the teasing and mischievous elements of Jane and Mr. Rochester's relationship. After the frantic and somber first scene, True Love is positively jaunty, for Jane is rather sly in her approach to her reunion with her love. Mr. Rochester at this point is blind and Jane practically sneaks up on him after arriving unannounced to his hiding place away from the world; her trick is similar to the one Rochester played when he disguised himself as a Roma woman to draw Jane out. A walking bass line in the

left hand of the piano, the right hand and strings bounce with triplets, the tone of happiness finally allowed to be indulged.



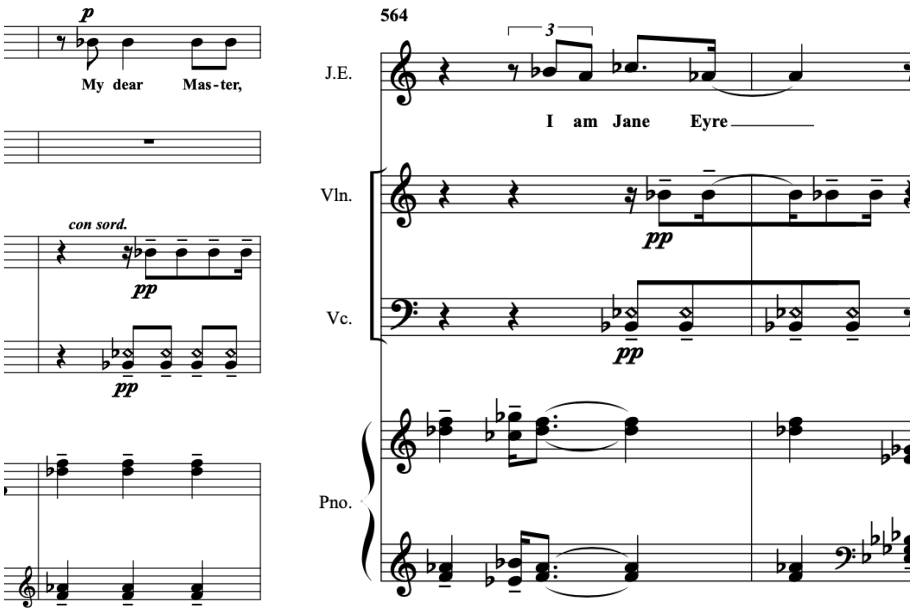
The True Love motif from *False Love/True Love.*

The entirety of the scene does not remain so carefree. Though there is more of what we consider positive and emotionally light sound in western music, it remains consistent with the grim solemnity of the first scene. The False Love motif and the rhythmic motif are not forgotten. They are utilized in similar ways as in the first scene, though with a new context, they behave differently. What had once represented dejection and the fear of imminent separation and disappointment now inspires tentative hope, wishes so near realization, hesitation with the knowledge that even though they have found each other, their expectations of one another may differ. This being said, often the appearances of the first and rhythmic motifs seem like intrusive thoughts the characters have to actively combat. Certain instances of the True Love motif contribute to this circumstance as well, an example below with the motif sung by Rochester.



An excerpt of measures 539 to 541 of *False Love/True Love*.

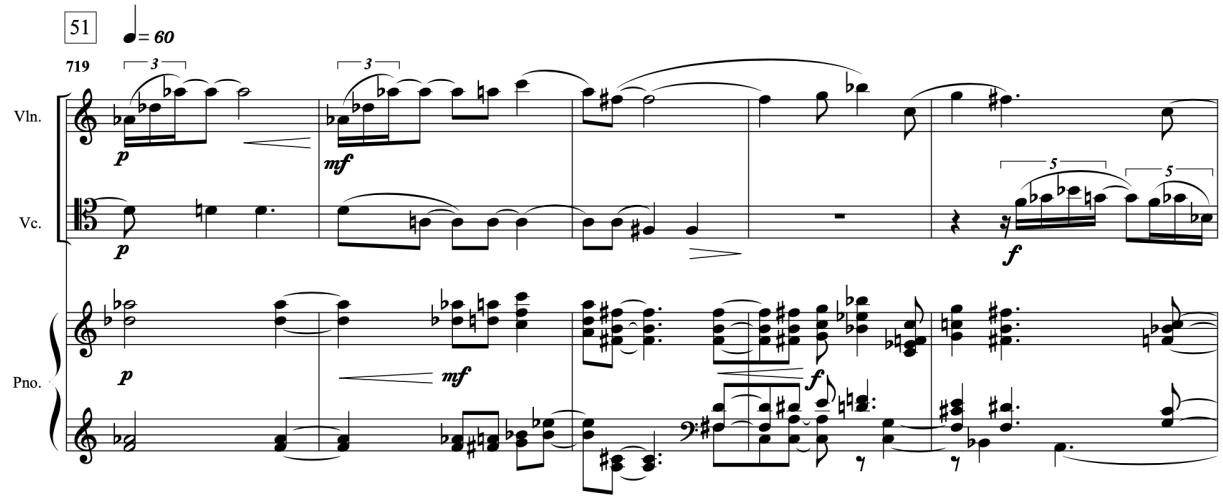
Two particular instances in which Vigeland employs the False Love motif are rather salient. The first, Jane assures Mr. Rochester that she is indeed returned to him, the libretto directly from the text; "My dear master, I am Jane Eyre."[55] The use of the False Love motif brings the past to the forefront for the characters. That Jane should sing it as she firmly announces herself, it is as if Vigeland is giving Jane the opportunity to reclaim the theme to give it new meaning; it is sung with such soft warmth, not at all how it was presented in the first scene.



An excerpt of measures 565 and 564 in which Jane sings the False Love motif.

[55] Ibid. pg. 500.

The last instance of the False Love motif captures what is left unsaid in the libretto. Jane, after proclaiming that she will never leave Rochester's side again, is suddenly self-conscious that she is too eager; "I felt a little embarrassed. Perhaps I had too rashly overleaped conventionalities; and he… saw impropriety in my inconsiderateness."[56] An intrusive thought if there ever was one, considering Rochester's reaction to her reappearance. It is a step back from the reclamation that Jane had started to enact, the creeping sense of doubt and self admonishment for having assumed Rochester's wishes regarding her.

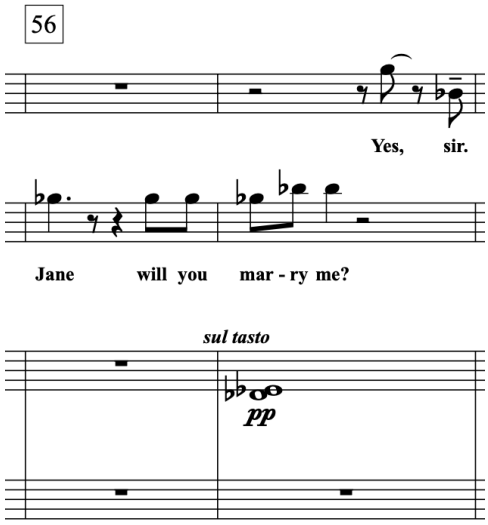


A recurrence of the False Love motif.

But Jane has nothing to fear. Rochester erases any reason to shrink away or restrict the expression of her sentiments with the admission that he desires a wife and that she remains the only one he wishes to tie himself to. The rhythmic motif reasserts itself, but it is not the same uncertainty born of dejection or certain despair. The hesitation is only a symptom of bashful

[56] Ibid. pg. 502.

feeling, the tone not so foreboding as it was in the first scene. It all amounts to one question: the motif is given to Rochester as he finally asks Jane to marry him.



The rhythmic motif sung by Rochester in *False Love/True Love.*

Chapter 4

Reader, we now return to the world of film with an adaptation unlike any of the other films and mini-series that have been made to bring this book to life. A story so dramatic, of course, calls for music that can match it. Who better than Dario Marianelli, best known for his three period film scores in collaboration with director Joe Wright, to compose an immersive score that lives and breathes as the text does? In many of Marianelli's compositions, the influence of his classical training is put to good use and he was able to pay homage to his classical beginnings in *Jane Eyre* (2011) - as Jane, Mrs. Fairfax and Adèle sit down to a meal, Mr. Rochester can be heard off screen somewhere in the house playing pianoforte, changing from one song to the next with impatience. What is heard is Marianelli's own recordings of himself playing Beethoven's piano

sonata 4 in E flat major (allegro) and Mozart's piano sonata 11 in A major (alla turca). With the addition of studies around film music and composition, the result of his varied influences is an amalgamation of diverse film scores, several of which have earned him prestigious accolades including an Oscar (best achievement in music written for motion pictures) and a Golden Globe (best original score) for *Atonement*.

Jane Eyre, from director Cary Joji Fukunaga, is a quintessential example of the stylized modern film adaptation of classic novels. At least out of all the film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, it is by far the most haunting and ominous interpretation. An almost faithful adaptation, especially in comparison to the 1944 film, the differences arise in the effort to maintain aesthetic and thematic consistency. Perhaps because of the choices made in writing the screenplay, Marianelli's compositional direction veers away from the presence of sarcasm and liveliness that pours out of the original text. Much of the playful banter between Jane and Rochester is absent both in dialogue and musical representation. The emphasis is on the darker themes of the narrative - the bleakness of Jane's childhood and her position, her struggle and loneliness, the bittersweet tragedy of her love story with Mr. Rochester. Watching the film is, at times, like watching 50 different paintings of one moment come to life, and yet the audience is only shown glimpses of that moment at large through Jane's eyes. The style of the film reflects the style of the original text in a sense that at times you are deep inside the consciousness of the heroine, immersed in all that is her being and feeling, but in moments of detachment, we, the audience, see that the heroine becomes the reader and the observer of her own story as she writes it.

From the overall aesthetic of Fukunaga's film, Jane's story comes across as a tragedy, but I would argue against the idea, for it does not end with her having only experienced loss and

suffering. It is a journey of obtaining and maintaining precious autonomy. In honoring her self-respect and rejecting the sinful temptation of becoming Mr. Rochester's mistress, a higher power rewards her, one of the rewards being an inheritance of a large fortune from her deceased uncle, possibly the ultimate form of independence a woman of the nineteenth century could have the privilege of. Jane becomes her own mistress, able to live and act as she chooses. The freedom to control her fate and return to the one she loves is given to her with the permission and blessing of Providence when she is overcome with sudden energy within her before she hears Rochester's disembodied voice call out her name in desperation across the empty moors. Jane knows it is not madness or possession; she describes this power as "the work of nature", that "it was [her] time to assume ascendency. [Her] powers were in play and in force."[57] This divine power, earned and gifted, is the result of unbendable will and character.

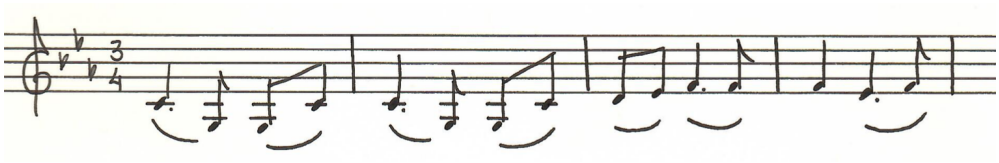
For Rochester, too, this story is not just tragedy, though he undoubtedly suffers far more than Jane, and pays the heavier price for his willful misdirection and sinful past. He narrowly escapes a wretched demise in a fire that destroys the physical manifestation of his family heritage and legacy. He had once declared that he was "paving hell with energy" and "laying down good intentions",[58] a statement which foreshadows his fate. The inferno of hell comes to him in the mortal world. The first incident, he was rescued from burning alive in his bed by Jane, but the second, he was crushed in his burning house after his failed efforts to stop his wife from jumping off the roof to her death. He had to be dragged out of the flames, dragged out of hell, to live and achieve his own "rebirth"; his life in exchange for his hand and sight. There is much he had to forfeit, willingly and unwillingly, but if there is one thing that Charlotte Brontë reiterates

[57] Ibid. pg. 484.
[58] Ibid. pg. 161.

in her writing, it is that the justice of God and nature is the only true justice, not a single person's idea of what they believe they are owed. Once Rochester gives up his ideas of what he believes his justice should be and surrenders to laws of his - and Jane's - religion, he is granted what he desires, what he deserves, and the debt is paid. In continuing to live a moral life after the destruction of Thornfield and through his marriage to Jane, he is given another mercy and partially regains sight in one eye.

Awaken

Our two protagonists ultimately achieve what they most wish for; to be with and love their equal in intelligence and character, away from the superficialities and facades of the gentry's social expectations. In spite of the primary emotion of melancholy conveyed, Marianelli could not fail in perfectly capturing what is so bittersweet about the narrative. Yes, there is sorrow, there is desperation, yearning, suffering, but reader, there is also the heartbreak of long-awaited happiness. Where this film and score lacks in humor, it certainly does not lack in passion. It is simple, but with rich texture and depth; two motifs, a primary and a secondary, are repeated throughout the film. Variations of these themes are used to portray the shifts of Jane's perspective relating to her physical space, the landscape of her introspection, and the nature of her relationship with Rochester as it develops. The primary theme and its variations are used always in relation to Jane's emotional proximity with Rochester and their relationship, but the secondary theme and its variations appear in moments of chilling suspicion, mystery, anguish and/or fear.

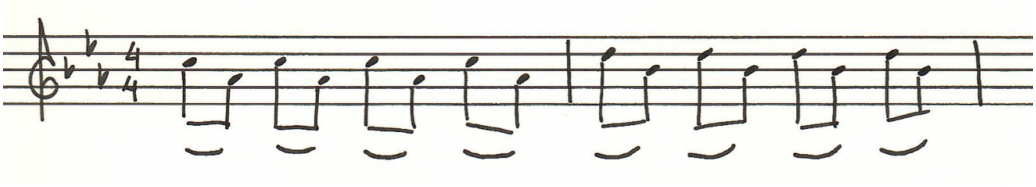


A transcription of the primary motif in *Jane Eyre* (2011).

The primary theme is not introduced in its full form until the proposal scene; all previous appearances are variations or brief glimpses of individual cells. There is raw honesty in the phrasing of the solo violin's melody, in Jane's own confession to Rochester; "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal - as we are!"[59] But as Rochester continues to entreat her and reassert that, indeed, she is the one he loves. Such an expression of disbelief at odds with a want to give in to passion is demonstrated by a slow, careful crescendo, until the violin pauses, the orchestra extending the cadence, as if to speak Rochester's words - "My bride is here… because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane, will you marry me?"[60] - before the heartbreaking and satisfying resolution to the tonic. The violin's swift ascending and descending arpeggios in c minor are an exultation, both for Jane and for Rochester, and though they are Rochester's words in the text, Marianelli gives the fervent sentiment to them both; "Make my happiness - I will make yours."[61] To make it all the more mystical and the product of a daydream or fairytale, as Jane says in chapter 24, a celesta joins the harp in its slow iterations of each chord as the sequence progresses.

[59] Ibid. pg. 292.
[60] Ibid. pg. 294.
[61] Ibid. pg. 295.

Marianelli's composition style is unique in that he has written several scores with free tempo, *Jane Eyre* included. This freedom, combined with the texture of the orchestration, gives the music a consciousness; the sound is alive and speaks as any person would, in its own time with its own internal pulse. It is as liberating as it is precarious in the same way that nature is in all its definitions. Recurring moments of simple arpeggios and perfect fourth intervals that are overlapped, played by different instruments and their entrances interspersed. The layers are a sound painting for the vast depth of Jane's imagination, as well as the romanticization of her own memories; "In those days I was young, and all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind… maturing youth added… a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give."[62] With such a torrent of sound, it is easy to understand the precariousness of Jane's situation; she lacks the autonomy to take control of her life and situation. It is the embodiment of a world yet to be discovered, but the boundaries of gender and societal rank make it impossible to access "a power of vision which might overpass that limit."[63]



A transcription of the secondary motif in *Jane Eyre* (2011).

[62] Ibid. pg. 132.
[63] Ibid. pg. 129.

"A Savage, a Sharp, a Shrilly Sound"

What is most interesting about the secondary theme is its polysemy. It is often sung by a disembodied feminine voice, bringing to the forefront the supernatural and soul-stirring themes of the narrative. Its simple rhythm and the alternation between minor thirds and major thirds evokes the taunting and mirthless laugh of Bertha Mason and the sonic visualization of her roaming the halls of Thornfield, as if she were a vengeful ghost, the continuous presence of Rochester's undesirable past. During the scene in which Jane is left in the attic to tend to Richard Mason's wounds, Jane approaches the locked door hidden behind a hung tapestry. It is barely audible, but Bertha is heard singing the secondary theme, its resonance echoing in her desolate chamber. To hear it is a feeling akin to hearing a small child sing a nursery rhyme in a horror film. To add to this is the irony of religious imagery, translated from the text to sounds with the qualities of early western music (again, the alternating minor and major thirds); "the doors of a great cabinet… whose front, divided into twelve panels, bore, in grim design, the heads of the twelve apostles, each inclosed in its separate panel as in a frame; while above them at the top rose an ebon crucifix and a dying Christ."[64]

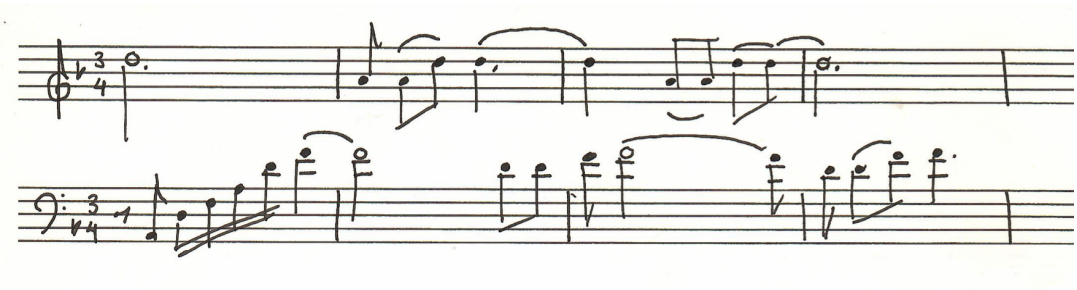
In the same vein, it is the reminder of the ghosts of Jane's past; her parents, Helen Burns, and figuratively, the relinquishment of romantic innocence. It is unfortunate that the scenes were cut from the final theatrical release, but the theme plays in deleted scenes of Jane out in the wilderness, the sudden appearance of Helen's ghost leading her in the direction of help and long

[64] Ibid. pg. 243.

lost family, a sign sent from a higher power; “Oh, Providence! sustain me a little longer! Aid! - direct me!”[65]

The score is both a soundscape for the physical spaces Jane inhabits and a text painting for Jane’s narration. Before the film even begins, the murmur of a cello playing the second theme inspires aching loneliness, the deep, sustained drone of basses emerging from silence and the soft interspersed whimpers of the violins expanding to give voice to Jane. It is as if she is issuing a warning through tears; “Gentle reader… May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless and so agonised as in that hour left my lips; for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love.”[66] The orchestra continues to build, subtle brass added to the basses whose drone begins to swell forebodingly, the high strings gradually synchronizing, until the brass make their final exit and all the strings come together to form a trembling d minor chord. The solo violin begins a variation of the first theme, the melodic voice of Jane beginning to cry in earnest, the full power of despair, betrayal, and disappointed hopes overcoming her as she faces the great expanse of endless moorland. The variation reiterates itself in a crescendo, climbing the outline of a Dm7 chord until it reaches a sorrowful high point. The cello answers the cry, its own sobs heard its own climb up the same chord - Rochester’s voice, wild in his failure and his own disappointment. The violin and cello imitate each other, repeating the cell, a mirror of what is to come in the story when Jane and Rochester call out to each across the moors before she returns to him. They both had experienced the same loss - disappointed hopes and a love so impossible - and so, the cello and violin exchange the same exclamation.

[65] Ibid. pg. 379.
[66] Ibid. pg. 370.



A transcription of the solo violin and solo cello imitating the primary motif.[67]

Conclusion

My dear reader, we have gone through only three of many examples of music inspired by and adapted from *Jane Eyre,* each with their own unique way of understanding the text. We have seen the effects of intervals in melody, simple and complex rhythms, and the textures and colors of both dissonant and consonant harmonies that have been attuned to the aesthetics and ideological themes of the novel. What can music say that literature cannot? In the case of adaptations, music fills in the blanks of what is left out while adding supplement to what is kept of the original content. Understanding music in relation to literature opens new pathways for the imagination to conjure images, landscapes, characters, personalities, and so much more. Deeper feelings must be inspired in order for a work of art to transcend. It is, without a doubt, difficult to do justice in describing a work like *Jane Eyre*, but where words fail, music is conscious of how it might succeed. Beethoven, Prokofiev, Rimsky-Korsokov, and our esteemed composers of the adaptations we discussed all saw this truth. My purpose was to emphasize literature interpreted through music and before I began in earnest, I referenced two quotes referring to literature as the

[67] Due to the irregularity of free tempo, this is an estimation of this part of the score.

food of love. Yes, the purpose was the focus of music and it has been established that both forms can stand on their own, but once it is all considered, why cannot both literature and music be the food of love, of the soul? The music of this discussion would be nothing without Charlotte Brontë's brilliant novel, and it is almost certain that Charlotte's novel would not be the same without the music that inhabited her environment and influenced her. I will leave you with a sentiment from *Jane Eyre* that embodies the efforts of human beings to put into art that which is not easily put into words:

I dangers dared; I hindrance scorned;
I omens did defy:
Whatever menaced, harassed, warned,
I passed impetuous by.[68]

[68] Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* pg. 313

Bibliography

Anonymous. “Literature.” *The Era*. November 14, 1847. https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/review-of-jane-eyre-from-the-era.

Anonymous. “The Last New Novel.” *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*. December 1847. https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/anonymous-review-of-jane-eyre.

Austen, Jane. “Chapter 9.” Essay. In *Pride and Prejudice*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 2020.

Barker, Juliet. *The Brontës: Wild Genius on the Moors: The Story of Three Sisters*. Electronic. W W Norton & Co Inc, 2012.

Brady, Frank. *Citizen Welles: A Biography of Orson Welles*. New York, NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1989.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Edited by Stevie Davies. UK: Penguin Random House, 2006.

“The Brontës and the Haworth Music Scene.” In Search of Anne Brontë, February 22, 2019. http://www.annebronte.org/2017/06/11/the-brontes-and-the-haworth-music-scene/.

Burgan, Mary. “Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction.” *Victorian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1986).

Byerly, Alison. *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

“False Love/True Love.” Nils Vigeland, 2021. https://www.nilsvigeland.com/catalog/false-love-true-love.

Gann, Kyle. “Nils Vigeland.” *Chamber Music*, March 2010. https://www.kylegann.com/AmericanComposer.html.

Gerin, Winifred. *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of a Genius*. London, UK: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

Hennessy, John. *Emily Jane Bronte and Her Music*. Layerthorpe, York: WK Publishing, 2018.

Hill, Andrew Warren. “From Among the Dead: Bernard Herrmann’s Vertigo.” Essay. In *Scoring the Screen: The Secret Language of Film Music*, 1–22. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2017.

Johnson, Edward. “Bernard Herrmann: A Biographical Sketch.” The Bernard Herrmann Society, 2011. http://www.bernardherrmann.org/articles/biographical-sketch/.

Selznick, David O. *Memo from David O. Selznick*. Edited by Rudy Behlmer. New York, NY: The Viking Press, Inc., 1972.

Shakespeare, William. “Act 1 Scene 1.” Essay. In *Twelfth Night* . S.l.: CREATESPACE INDEPENDENT P, 2017.

Smith, Steven C. *A Heart at Fire’s Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.

Wallace, Robert K. *Emily Bronte and Beethoven: Romantic Equilibrium in Fiction and Music*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986.