

Dvořák, Martinů and Gershwin as a Source of Inspiration for Vladimír Sís's Music Films

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Abstract

Music film is a genre that largely follows its own rules. These rules are determined mainly by the conception of musical content and also by the degree of interaction between music and image. The presented study summarizes the results of analyzes of music films by Vladimír Sís created on instrumental and vocal-instrumental compositions by Dvořák, Gershwin, and Martinů. The used method of two-phase analysis is based on the musical and film analysis of selected works and their mutual comparison with emphasis on functional changes of the originally autonomous musical pieces and their content-forming potential. It also seeks to capture a common analytical basis for different types of music films, creating a universal method for basic research. The results of the analysis point to both the typical features of the music and its specific use in Sís's films, including the director's intended popularization and didactic intentions.

Key words

Vladimír Sís, music film, visualization, analysis, research, Antonín Dvořák, George Gershwin, Bohuslav Martinů

1 Introduction and theoretical background

The work of Czech the television and film director and experimenter Vladimír Sís, a master of short and medium-length films, was unique in many ways. In his life-long work, travelogue films, stage productions, and biographical works stand out. Some have earned awards and recognition at foreign festivals. However, a substantial part of Sís's portfolio also consists of unique music films of various focus.

Musical film is, in a general sense, a film work whose plot is linked to a musical accompaniment. Fukač and Vysloužil state more precisely that it is a film product in which the factual (or fictional) meaning of music become the essence of its theme and content.¹ The degree of film's dependence on the music is variable and ranges from film operas, musicals, or ballets, where music has a direct plot-creating function, to the second case, in which music plays an important (not just an accompanying) role, but is no longer in close synergy with the film storyline. We encounter such practice, for example, in fairy tales, comedies, but also in more serious genres, including biographical films. Nevertheless, the music used in these, mostly connected with the person or group of artists to which the film is dedicated, usually works only as a thematic binder to the story. Its role does not usually go beyond diegesis.

In Czech, respectively Czechoslovak production, a number of films that can be described as film musicals were shot between the 1960s and 1980s. Even here, the ratio, especially the function of music, is considerably inconsistent.² Whether it's the strongly music-oriented *Green Gold* (*Starci na chmelu*, 1964), *If a Thousand Clarinets* (*Kdyby tisíc klarinetů*, 1964), *A Night at Karlstein* (*Noc na Karlštejně*, 1973) or Sís's *Ballad for a Bandit* (*Baladu pro banditu*, 1978), where musical accompaniment and lyrics co-create the narration and turn the films into real musicals, or the on music relatively less dependent films such as *The Phantom of Morrisville* (*Fantom Morrisvillu*, 1966), *Men About Town* (*Světáci*, 1969) or *Let Him Face the Music!* (*Jen ho nechte, ať se bojí!*, 1977), where music plays a significant role, but no longer contributes to the overall sound or meaning of the films to such an extent. Here we find another connection with the work of Vladimír Sís, namely in *The Singing Film* (*Zpívající film*, 1972). It draws on the musicals described above, but does not achieve their success, despite the relatively original collage processing of the story and creative work with additional shots and archival footage.³

Music visualizations are a specific type of music film with a high degree of audiovisual dependence. Their content is created on music, unlike the standard production where, in most cases, the scoring comes up after the scenes have been shot. This trend was to some extent preceded by short animated films by Walt Disney named *Silly Symphonies* (1929–1939).⁴ A few years later, Warner Bros. took part in these efforts by starting the

1 FUKAČ, Jiří a Jiří VYSLOUŽIL. *Slovník české hudební kultury*. Praha: Supraphon, 1997, p. 303.

2 We are, of course, talking about diegetically created music that participates in the plot of the film, not about incidental music, a common part of most films.

3 Cf. MATZNER, Antonín a Jiří PILKA. *Česká filmová hudba*. Praha: Dauphin, 2002, p. 413.

4 See GOLDMARK, Daniel. Drawing a New Narrative for Cartoon Music. In: David, NEUMEYER. *The Oxford handbook of film music studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 235.

Looney Tunes series. In both examples, musically motivated works for young television audiences appeared.

Animated films typically pay attention to the musical form of the story, and at least American studios choose songs from the classical repertoire to a large extent. In addition to the famous *Fantasia* (1940), film and television audience hear compositions by Franz Liszt, Johann Strauss Jr., and other noted authors also in the short stories about Tom and Jerry by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, which date back to the middle of the last century.⁵

As stated above, musical visualizations are the domain of animated film.⁶ All the more rare are attempts that try to transfer these tendencies to the realm of a feature (non-animated) film. Following the work of Vladimír Sís, we can talk about music films and visualizations inspired by a composition from the classical repertoire. They mostly work with both its musical and non-musical content or the context of the period. These unique and at the same time almost forgotten films include music films and documentaries made between 1968 and 1986. Among them there are short and medium-length works like *Rhapsody in Blue* (1968), *Antonín Dvořák: Symphonie č. 9 e-moll, op. 95. „Z Nového světa“* (Antonín Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95. “From the New World”, 1977), *Bohuslav Martinů: Otvírání studánek* (Bohuslav Martinů: Opening of the Wells, 1981) or *Zrání* (Ripening, 1986). As the names themselves suggest, they are based on selected works of Czech and partly American provenance. Due to their character, they individually fall into different subgenres of a music film. Due to their content, directing concept and the original intention of the author, these are unique film products. The original intention was mainly to try to popularize (classical) music through film, i.e., to provide a certain cultural, social and educational overlap.

In addition to Sís, efforts to make a film out of the concert compositions appeared in Czechoslovak production in the 1930s. Director Tomáš Trnka produced his *Storm over the Tatras* (Bouře and Tatrami, 1932) based on Vítězslav Novák's symphonic poem *In the Tatras*, and the *Flowers in the Tatras* (Květy na Tatrách, 1932) created from the *Flowers of the Tatras*, a melodrama by Josef Bohuslav Foerster. Unfortunately, none of these short experimental films have achieved significant success, and similar efforts have been criticized at that time.⁷

Due to the above-mentioned disunity of approaches to making music films, there is no universally applicable analytical method that would cover both traditional and special types of musically oriented cinematographic works. However, it is possible to identify certain common elements emerging across this genre. First of all, it is the musical component, which is, within its musical genre, usually describable by usual means of musical analysis. Then we can confront its results with the film visual and its content, which can

5 Ibid., p. 236.

6 Already in the 1930s, Kurt London ranked animated films among the main types of music film, in addition to opera, operetta, and concert adaptations. (LONDON, Kurt. *Film Music: A summary of the Characteristic Features of Its History, Aesthetics, Technique; and Possible Developments*. London: Faber & Faber, 1936, pp. 127–153.)

7 BROUSIL, A. M. *Česká hudba v českém filmu: Vývoj a poslání*. Praha: Václav Petr, 1940, pp. 6–7.

also be analyzed separately according to predetermined requirements. On such a constituted basis we can build further phases of research, which corresponds to the specific ideas of the researcher or the needs of the research plan.

This study presents the results of the analysis of selected works by Vladimír Sís which are created on the above principle. It seeks to capture a common analytical basis for three films of rather different genres and to create a universal method for a basic, default level of research. Based on it, the partial method of comparative analysis is chosen as the most suitable procedure for obtaining the data needed to answer the specific research questions (see below).

2 Analysis of music films by Vladimír Sís

The concept of this study partially takes over the categorization of approaches to film music, which were described in the theoretical part of the author's dissertation.⁸ It was a comprehensive multidisciplinary view of the development, functions, and ways of using music in film with references to foreign scientific studies and own proposals of analytical approaches. Semantic, aesthetic, or psychological aspects were not left out either. The practical output was projected into a detailed analysis of selected films by Vladimír Sís with predetermined criteria and research questions. Thus, the presented text is not only a presentation and analysis of selected works but also a collective case study identifying potential analytical methods for these specific types of music film.⁹ Due to the mentioned intentions of the director, emphasis was also placed on possible popularization and didactic overlaps.

2.1 Research design

The multi-level qualitative method of data collection was built on the content analysis of three selected music films by Vladimír Sís. First, it followed the form and nature of music as an autonomous artistic component, then its potential functional, form, and semantic changes when used as a part of a film.¹⁰

In the case of Sís's works, we do not deal with original, but archival music, that is, with one that was not created for the film. It is therefore relatively easier to analyze the

8 MUSIL, Ondřej. *Analytické přístupy k filmové hudbě na příkladu díla Vladimíra Síse*. Brno, 2019. Disertační práce. Masarykova univerzita.

9 This type of case study works on the principle of using a common set of research questions that provide a basis for studying each individual case (see e.g. TARDI, Susanna. Case Study: Defining and Differentiating Among Types of Case Studies. BARON, Annette – Kelly MCNEAL. *Case Study Methodology in Higher Education*. Hershey: IGI Global, 2019, pp. 1–19).

10 Elements of one of the basic methods of qualitative research – thematic analysis – with which it has common stages of preparation, such as priority determination of research categories and analytical samples, can also be traced in research design (cf. FLICK, Uwe. *An introduction to qualitative research*. Edition 5. Los Angeles: Sage, 2014, pp. 421–423).

form, the primal semantic content, and the historical and artistic background of the compositions, which can be viewed/heard in their authentic form. Even the availability of musical score for concert compositions of this kind is greater than for original film compositions.

Following the nature of the analyzed films, the main and specific research questions were determined. They mainly aimed at the style in which the music is treated in its original version and in the subsequent connection with the components of the film work. They also focus on the possibilities of transmitting non-musical content, again in comparison of music and image. The selection of questions corresponds to the specifics of the films, their processing, and the intended original purpose.

First of all, it was examined whether the films deal significantly with the structure and musical means of expression of the original compositions. Furthermore, the focus was on whether the plot of the films supports implicit or explicit non-musical content of the compositions. Due to the presumed popularization aim of films, specific research questions related to the real possibilities of using films for such purposes were then defined.

The research of all three chosen films was divided into two main parts, the first of which dealt with the analysis of music as a separate component (music analysis), the second dealt with its connection with the film story (film analysis). Their correlations and differences were always critically evaluated at the end.

The music analysis first outlined the artistic and creative background of each composition, including information about the author's actual or anticipated creative intention. Then, attention was paid to the original or gradually emerging semantic qualities and non-musical content of the work. The analysis itself then consisted of a description of the musical form and interpretation of the musical content. The interpretation was focused not only on the motivic and thematic structure or form type but tried to cover the work more comprehensively. Therefore, references to the harmonic structure, tectonic means, dynamics, timbre solution, or the kinetic side of the music also permeated it. Attention was paid to partial parameters only where they had a special status or potentially depended on the sound and understanding of the content.

The form analysis of compositions was performed by techniques of structural analysis of musical units (here mainly form) and some methods of content analysis. The methodological process corresponded most to the so-called successive method, the main feature of which is the principle of time sequence, i.e. watching the music (score) from beginning to end. It traditionally captures the course of the composition in terms of motivic or thematic work, harmony, and tonal structure or dynamics. At appropriate places, the description was supplemented by sheet music.¹¹ The so-called perceptual method was also marginally included, with the primal focus on own mental reactions and feelings while listening.¹²

The successive method was also chosen for equal research conditions in film analysis. A comparative approach to both components, visual and audio, and the search for

11 The notation was processed with the Sibelius software and provided with additional information about instrumentation.

12 Cf. FERKOVÁ, Eva. *Hudobná analýza: Teória a stručné dejiny*. Bratislava: AEPRESS, 2007, pp. 20–24.

correlations and differences was predominant. Due to the greater probability of semantic connotations, content analysis was supported more than in music analysis.

Just as the musical analysis was supplemented by sheet music, the description of the film was also supported by screenshots of scenes in which there was an important link of the music and image (opening of themes, musical changes) or a significant film moment. The screenshots were left in their original graphic form without major retouching, except for the occasional use of gamma correction where needed. Obtaining digital copies of films and their use for research purposes was made possible with the permission of The Czech Television, the rights owner.

2.2 Research questions

The main and specific research questions relate primarily to the way in which the music is handled both in its original version and in the subsequent connection with the components of the film work. They also focus on the possibilities of transmitting non-musical content, again in the comparison of musical and film works, and take the possibilities of didactic use and the popularization assumptions into account.

Main research questions:

- 1) Is the structure and musical means of expression significantly reflected in the analyzed films?
- 2) Does the plot of the films underline the implicit or explicit non-musical content of the music?

Specific research questions:

- 1) Is it possible to use audiovisual materials processed in this way for didactic purposes?
- 2) Is it possible to confirm the popularization potential of the analyzed films?

3 Research outcomes

The following passages are an abbreviated overview of the results of analyzes and interpreted data, together with basic information about the films and brief historiography and semantics of the compositions on the basis of which they were created.

3.1 Rhapsody in Blue

Rhapsody in Blue was made by Vladimír Sís in 1968 as a short film. Compared to his other music films, he placed more emphasis on pure visualization of music, especially its sound and motion characteristics which he transformed into both a visual and a dance component. In the case of genre classification, we can therefore speak of a pure film



Fig. 1. New York City sequences. Source: *Rhapsody in Blue* [film].
Directing Vladimír Sís. Czechoslovakia, 1968.



Fig. 2. Studio shots with dance numbers. Source: *Rhapsody in Blue* [film].
Directing Vladimír Sís. Czechoslovakia, 1968.

visualization of a musical work. There are no dialogues and, for the most part, no film noises and sound effects. In this case, Sís used his favorite method of film cuts.¹³ All content-creative material is represented by music, visual compositions, scenery, and dance.

Although rhapsody as a type of musical composition does not presuppose program processing, under the impressions of older composers (Dvořák, Liszt, Ravel) apparently hints of regional classification and references to national musical identity enter the compositions. The original (working) title of Gershwin's composition, *American Rhapsody*,¹⁴ and its jazz features, which contribute to the creation of location connotations, also support the program basis. *Rhapsody in Blue* is used in many films as a reference to New York City or at least of the typical American sound in the first decades of the last century. Such use can be found, for example, in Woody Allen's *Manhattan* (1979) or *The Great Gatsby* (2013) by Baz Luhrmann. In the same topographical spirit and context of the period, *Rhapsody* was included in Walt Disney's *Fantasia 2000* (1990), which follows its famous predecessor from 1940. It is therefore evident that the semantic overlaps in Gershwin's composition were passed on.

In general, the composition does not work with direct musical quotations or soundiness as real programmatic compositions do. The semantic element consists in the typical compositional process integrating jazz and classical music in the form that best captures the period's musical and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Based on these non-musical features, we can interpret Sís's approach to the music as a personal concept that is not much related to Gershwin's primal compositional-semantic intentions. Still, we can state that the director took the aforementioned topographical references of the composition into account. The film sequences capture the studio (atelier) scenes, where the dancing is performed, and short views on the city of New York. The blue color of the studio, scenery, and props is also noticeable throughout the film.

Vladimír Sís worked with the former Brno State Theater ballet ensemble and choreographer Pavel Šmok on the dance scenes. Šmok's choreographies mostly follow the principle of pure visualization in the sense of descriptiveness and expression of musical means. It is possible that some dance passages were taken from Šmok's own choreography for the Brno performance of *Rhapsody in Blue* in the 1960s.

3.1.1 Comparison of music and image

The close connection of Gershwin's composition with a substantial part of the film lies in the discussed dance concept of Sís and Šmok. Music is the main component and practically everything submits to it. Sometimes it copies what is happening on the screen, another time it proceeds independently. Still, all dance sequences shown from the beginning of the composition fulfill their descriptive role almost perfectly.

13 This cutting method is formed on specific work with a camera and film cuts, which Sís often combined with the image collage method.

14 SCHEBERA, Jürgen. *George Gershwin: životopis ve fotografiích, textech a dokumentech*. Jinočany: H&H, 2000, pp. 60–61.

The film introduction is a kind of topographical and partly musical prologue, in which some of the musical motifs are heard and at the same time almost all visual motifs are seen. The concept is unusual and builds on different principles than the main part of the film. As if Sís wanted to point out his inner motives when visiting New York more than the authenticity of the place in which he set the story.

Sís managed to insert a non-musical content into the originally non-programmatic composition in some places, namely a meeting and a love affair of two people. A suitably chosen place in the second half of the composition completes the mood of this inner storyline. It is no coincidence that “Love Theme” or “Love Song” is used for this musical theme.



Fig. 3. “Love Theme”. Source: author’s own transcription.

Visual and motion components correspond to the tectonic exposure of music in its climactic increases and decreases most of the time.

The film excels especially in visualization techniques of scenography and dance, next to the musicological or cinematological viewpoint. Fragments of ballet, modern dance, and jazz are mixed here. It is possible to point out the functionality of the choice of dance style, the differences in traditional and modern ballet, etc. By watching the course of the music and its direct connection to choreographic elements, listening to music gets added value and can support remembering of the composition. As for the documentary potential of the film, it is not a comprehensive source of historical or artistic information. As already mentioned, the film commentary is represented exclusively by the visual and sound (musical) impulses.

The overall concept is unique and fresh in the context of home production. Modernist directing tendencies mix with traditional studio techniques, while their contrast does not interfere. For such creative approaches, however, it always depends on individual assessment.

3.2 Antonín Dvořák: Symfonie č. 9 e-moll, op. 95. „Z Nového světa“

Medium-length music film *Antonín Dvořák: Symfonie č. 9 e-moll, op. 95. „Z Nového světa“* (Antonín Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95. “From the New World”) was created in 1977, almost ten years after the filming of *Rhapsody in Blue*. The difference in both works is not only in the year of their production but also in the genre they represent. While *Rhapsody* meets the condition of pure visual and dance visualization of

music, the film inspired by Dvořák's last symphony fluctuates between documentary and visual collage with a close connection to the musical accompaniment. The introductory commented film passage, a kind of prologue, has a documentary character. Visualization tendencies start with the first bars of the symphony and are a combination of film shots and photographic documentation.

Even though the film does not depend on sounding music in terms of synchronization and visual descriptiveness too much, the musical accompaniment comes to the fore because the director transferred the content to the scenes according to it. He worked partly with generally declared non-musical qualities, partly with his own idea of the musical content, including elements of folklore and traditional folk ceremonies.

Symphony is fundamentally a non-program type of musical composition. Antonín Dvořák, like Johannes Brahms, built his symphonic works more on the basis of absolute music, though not exclusively. He thus partly created a counterpoint to the romantic and impressionistic music conception. In the case of the *New World Symphony*, the program is also not present, at least not explicitly. We can only rely on its naming referring to the place in which it originated, or to the probable inspiration of the composer.

It is the frequent and not always trustworthy connection with the circumstances of its origin that has a significant effect on the evaluation of the content of the symphony. Homesickness and desire to return are often seen in longing melodies, whereas dramatic moments may evoke the composer's astonishment from the visited country, impressions from the long journey across the ocean, etc.

Dance elements in some parts of the composition, notably in the third movement (*Molto vivace*), cannot be overlooked either. We can interpret this intention either by a traditional connection with the rituals of the Native Americans or (somewhat more likely) as a reference to Czech folk dances, which the author remembered during the composition. Regardless of finding possible meanings, however, the dance character simply appears as a legacy of the traditional character of the third movements in symphonies.

3.2.1 Comparison of music and image

Vladimír Sís took the visualization of *Symphony No. 9* relatively loosely. Apart from the documentary introduction, the fragments of which return in certain places in the form of an attached photographic and visual documentation, the film emphasizes mainly the authenticity of the depiction of a typical Czech environment. Special attention is paid to folk customs and crafts as well as to Dvořák's favorite topics based on folk literature and folklore.

The musical form of the composition is completely preserved, only omitting a few partial repetitions, for example at the end of the exposition in the first movement (*Adagio. Allegro molto*).

In some places, the picture copies musical changes and breaks, while in some places both components flow independently of each other. Motion characteristics or other semantic means are not significant in the context of the whole film. Only in places does



Fig. 4. Stylized concert shots. Source: Antonín Dvořák: *Symfonie č. 9 e-moll, op. 95*. „Z nového světa“ [film]. Directing Vladimír Sís. Czechoslovakia, 1977.



Fig. 5. Forest rituals (third movement). Source: Antonín Dvořák: *Symfonie č. 9 e-moll, op. 95*. „Z nového světa“ [film]. Directing Vladimír Sís. Czechoslovakia, 1977.

the image resemble musical-expressive changes, for example in working with tempo and dynamics. Each movement of the symphony has a unifying aspect in the form of a folk setting and stylized concert scenes (see Fig. 4, 5). Nevertheless, each movement has some typical features.

The first movement is not linked to nature scenes as much as the following movements, and a large part of it is covered by arranged concert scenes from Karlovy Vary.

The second movement, on the other hand, is built mainly on natural scenery and shots of the exterior and interior of the house in Vysoká, where Dvořák spent time with his family. It underscores the lyrical tint and undoubtedly intended sentimentality and nostalgia. The third movement focuses on forest rituals and dances, which closely link the visual and musical content. The audiovisual interconnectedness of this part is by far the greatest within the entire film.

The final movement in its length works most significantly with folk crafts. The end of the film represents an arc return to the visual conception of the first movement.

On the one hand, compactness can be seen in certain scenes or images returning throughout the film, but the noticeable economy of the material, which sometimes returns in illogical places and so gives the impression of filling an empty space, can somewhat irritate a concerned spectator. Overall, though, the film is a very attractive combination of collage techniques, complementary visualizations, and authentic footage.

We can see the educational use of the film in the very film processing of the symphony, which may serve didactic purposes. In addition, together with the presumed semantic basis, Vladimír Sís emphasized the circumstances of the music's origin. This could help the audience to better understand the entire creative background of one of the most important symphonic works in history.

Thanks to the commented passage at the very beginning of the film, other composers and famous names of the music world are also introduced in the period context. Even important moments from this episode of Dvořák's life do not leave the interpretation aside. To a much greater extent, the film encourages interdisciplinary use, both in terms of the American and Czech society influenced by the lifestyle of the late Biedermeier, including its influence on artistic creation. Due to the considerable folklore focus of the scenes, Sís's work can also be used to present many folk traditions and ceremonies. They tend to be tied to a specific region and can in such a way be well confronted with the current maintenance of folk customs in the locality.

3.3 Bohuslav Martinů: Otvírání studánek

Bohuslav Martinů: Otvírání studánek (Bohuslav Martinů: Opening of the Wells) is the youngest of the analyzed films. It was created in 1981, and in terms of genre, it can be classified as a film visualization, like *Rhapsody in Blue*. Nonetheless, the interconnection of music and image is again taken more freely. Common elements in both films are evident in the stylized studio scenes with a greater emphasis on the synchronization of the music and image. Another connection is also dance and semantically motivated moves.

With the second film, Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9, The Opening of the Wells* shares folklore elements and a rural environment. Scenes depicting the ceremony of cleaning wells, as well as studio shots, are permeated with folk themes.



Fig. 6. Exterior scene showing the cleaning of wells. Source: Bohuslav Martinů: *Otvírání studánek* [film]. Directing Vladimír Sís. Czechoslovakia, 1981.

The relationship between the two films is also in documentary tendencies, although this happens to various degrees. In the *Opening of the Wells*, they are set in the film ending and refer mainly to the hometown of Bohuslav Martinů, Polička.

In certain places, Sís worked with transitions showing the interiors of a house, in which a pregnant woman, played by the actress Jana Plichtová, appears. This parallel storyline develops together with the main story and does not pass until the birth of a child. Possible semantic motivations for this will be described later.

In contrast to the two previous compositions, the programmatic focus of the cantata is clearly defined by the content of the original poem by Miloslav Bureš. It determines both the folk character and the setting of the text to music. It also gives rise to a direct description of the plot, which can be eased or intentionally influenced only by the style of the musical accompaniment, compared to the programmatic instrumental compositions. Yet, in the case of *Opening of the Wells* it is not even desirable to change the original topic.

3.3.1 Comparison of music and image

Of all the three, this film is less affected by the director's own inspirations and interpretations, which may cause a certain dullness and uniformity to it. On the other hand, the simple nature of the cantata requires such processing to some extent. Nevertheless, Vladimír Sís inserted some components that could be interpreted ambiguously, e.g., scenes with a pregnant woman, due to a lack of information and comparable explanations.

The distinction between the narrative part of the film and the more static last section built on inner expressions corresponds to the form and content of the composition. Real scenery complements the studio passages and their changeover helps the plot and drama. Admitting the visual divisions correspond to musical changes in only some places, the overall connection is not disruptive.

Dance visualizations are the film's main focus. Firstly, they are authentic and thus correspond to the simple folk character, which has been mentioned several times, and secondly, they show the main characters of the story in solo singing sections.

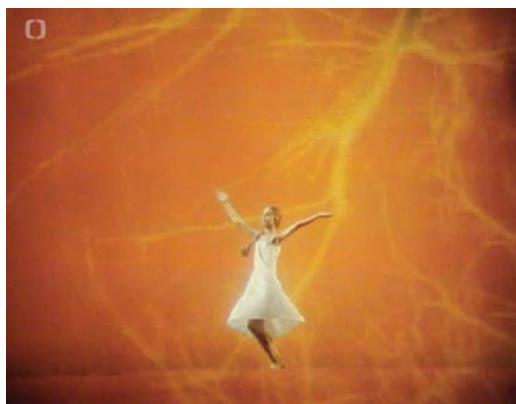


Fig. 7. Dance visualization with colored background. Source: *Bohuslav Martinů: Otvírání studánek* [film]. Directing Vladimír Sís. Czechoslovakia, 1981.

The documentary conception of the last passage of the film partially takes away the dramatic plan and reminds the procedures used by Sís during the filming of *Symphony No. 9*. Music is the center point again, unfortunately, the image may pull the viewer out of the focus on the lyrics. Discrepancies in the cantata's text and in the film story have appeared in several places.

The film has the potential to offer many ways of didactic use. In addition to the fact that the visual component captures real sceneries and corresponds to the plot framework of Bureš's text, it can be used primarily as a visual guide for moderated music listening. At the same time, the quality of the processing must be considered, which, similarly to previous films, goes back decades. Moreover, Sís's additionally inserted meanings can also mislead the spectators. On the other hand, they can be a good example of a broader concept and open a discussion on possible interpretations of the "water and life" symbolism. This is also related to folkloristic interpretations of customs and traditions.

4 Summary and evaluation

For easier interpretation and complex insight into the dispositional microcosm of the analyzed films, a comprehensive study of the theoretical background and complete em-

pirical data of the author's dissertation are required, in addition to watching the films themselves. The following is a summary of research results, including answers to research questions.

With the **first main research question**, we tried to find out whether the analyzed films deal significantly with the structure and musical means of expression of the compositions. The results show that *Rhapsody in Blue* undoubtedly showed the greatest connection between music and image. It can be classified as the purest form of visualization compared to the other two films. Dialogues are completely missing here and the main role of the story is played by music and dance. In most cases, the choreographies copy the melodic and dynamic course of the composition, they also work with the density of the score and with elements of jazz music. For other films, the interaction of musical means with visuals is not so tight. Visualization tendencies are noticeable only in certain sections, for example in the dance parts built on the third movement of Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9* or in the studio scenes of *Opening of the Wells*. Despite it all, films mostly take the differentiation of the works in relation to their structure into account. Overall, we can confirm the first research question in all three films.

The **second main research question** was focused on the expression of the directly or indirectly expressed non-musical content of the compositions through films. In this case, the various program focus of compositions and, finally, the generally accepted (musically unverified) semantic overlaps play a role.

The *Opening of the Wells* film tends to preserve the original theme, which is logical due to Martinů's cantata and its lyrics as the main content-creative element. Therefore, the disparity of musical and film content is out of place here. On the contrary, in *Symphony No. 9* Sís worked more freely with the anticipated non-musical program and created new content in many places. Although it was based on Dvořák's alleged intentions, its concrete form is not verifiable. *Rhapsody in Blue* was then largely made according to the director's plan, not according to the program of the composition, which, moreover, can be neither completely confirmed nor disproven. However, we may argue that Vladimír Sís worked with the given genre characteristics and with the depiction of the typical place represented by the composition.

Of course, it does not mean that the film automatically loses its qualities with less content continuity. This is just one of the views on that issue. In addition, it must be taken into account that each of the films has its own specifics within the genre, which also gives different use options.

The didactic usage of the films was the focus of the **first specific research question**, and it is variable for each film. Nevertheless, the very essence of their creation, i.e. classical musical composition, can be considered as an important creatively treatable aspect. Besides, each of the films offers a unique artistic and educational approach. Let us thereby consider this partial research question to be confirmed.

The **second specified research question** follows on from the previous paragraph and finds out whether it is possible to find the music-popularization potential in the analyzed films. It reflects the probable original intention of Vladimír Sís, who wanted to use films to promote classical music and make it more attractive.

It is well known that film has the ability to draw the viewer into its story to such an extent that its musical component is more absorbed at the same time. Often a theme or song becomes popular just because people have heard it within the cinematic world. In musical films, this probability increases the more the songs are more thoroughly connected to the film's plot. That is why Sís's films undoubtedly have this ability, and the director must have been aware of that. Therefore, we can again answer the last research question affirmatively, only with one condition. It is questionable to what extent these films can succeed with today's audience, considering the technical level of the time of they were made.

Conclusion

To their great detriment, music films by Vladimír Sís are today an almost forgotten part of his lifetime work, apart from the aforementioned musical *Ballad for a Bandit*. Sís's acclaimed documentary and biographical activities, which somewhat overshadow his remaining work, dominate the general awareness. Although these works are rightly at the forefront of interest, the artistic and didactic potential of the above-analyzed music films cannot be denied.

Therefore, the added value of the original research summarized in this study was the promotion of the director's musically oriented film work. However, the main focus was on the presentation of an analytical method universally applicable to various subspecies of films created on the basis of originally autonomous compositions. The results show that the common research basis consisting in comparing the music and film components of the three selected film works can be successfully used as a starting point for partial research goals, i.e. to monitor functional and semantic changes when using concert compositions as a content-forming material. The didactic qualities, contained in the research goals, open, among other things, a discussion about the possibilities of promoting classical music through cinematography. In this regard, Sís's music films also have something to offer.

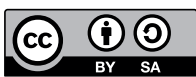
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