

Berklee College of Music, Valencia Campus

Balancing Innovation and Reiteration

Exploring creative liberty in *The Peanuts Movie* (2015)

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Introduction

There is a trend in the film world to renew old franchises, reintroducing classic stories that were loved by audiences many years ago back into the cinemas with modern direction, cinematography, artwork, and music. In the film world, these movies are either termed “remakes” or “reinterpretations”. Remakes take existing movies and modernize them, basing the new movie primarily on a past production. Reinterpretations are a milder form of remakes where the later movie is centered around the source material of the earlier movie, but not on the earlier movie itself. Often, however, the divide between remakes and reinterpretations are blurred. Many examples of remakes include large changes to the storyline, character lineup and other integral elements. One of the most common motivations behind these changes is the desire to reconcile the new version with modern cinematic aesthetics. *The Peanuts Movie*, directed by Steve Martino and released in November of 2015, is a perfect example of a reinterpretation. Many themes and plotlines are extracted from the original television specials and film productions, aired in varying frequency from 1959 to 2007; nonetheless, these components are reassembled into an entirely new, although reminiscent film. As we will discover in this paper, this newest addition to the franchise cleverly interweaves the more traditional elements with modern techniques.

From 1959, till his death in 1976, jazz composer and pianist Vince Guaraldi composed all the music for the Peanuts specials. The music for episodes like “A Charlie Brown Christmas” gained massive and enduring popularity. For *The Peanuts Movie* Christophe Beck was brought on to compose the score, a daunting task in face of the

strong tradition that was formed by Guaraldi and his successors. As is true with any remake or reinterpretation, musical decisions need to be made about how accurate the material should remain to the original versions. It is important to maintain the flavor of the original material, appeasing the established audience, but the goal is also to introduce new artistic decisions that will broaden followership. As a composer, there is also a desire to add some of your own individuality to the project. In the case of *The Peanuts Movie*, they targeted both the older generations (drawn to the movie by nostalgia) and the younger generation who they hoped to introduce to the franchise. Christophe Beck has some unique solution to this duality of tradition and innovation. The score to *The Peanuts Movie* can be divided into four categories: music that is directly borrowed from Vince Guaraldi's scores, Vince Guaraldi's music reinterpreted and incorporated into Christophe Beck's compositions, completely original music by Christophe Beck, and popular music that is placed into the movie by the music editors. An in depth analysis of the stylistic, orchestrational, and thematic content in each of these subsections should provide us with a case study of how one composer addressed the creative issues often found in remakes.

Synopsis

Charles Schulz, creator of "Peanuts", portrayed his fondness of the Christmas season throughout his career. From the quaint setting to the wintertime sports and the time spent among friends, Schulz deftly illustrates the winter season in the majority of his comics. The Peanuts Movie pays tribute to Schulz by introducing the beloved gang of characters with Vince Guaraldi's classic wintertime theme, "Skating". In homage to the cartoonist, the film's central messages are drawn from Schulz's

favorite comic strip themes: unrequited love, self-doubt, and the power of companionship.

The film follows the beloved protagonist, Charlie Brown, and his trusty dog, Snoopy, as they each embark on their own epic quest. It is Charlie Brown's infatuation with The Little Red-Haired Girl that prompts the love-struck underdog to prove he is a "winner". Unfortunately, each of his attempts— which include an appearance in the school talent show, a speech at a recognition assembly, and an individually-completed partner book report— end in disappointment of some kind. Despite his best efforts, succeeding often seems impossible to Charlie Brown and his defeats— although portrayed comedically— cause him to ponder human shortcomings and question his own abilities. It is only the ebullient Beagle who is capable of pushing Charlie Brown to confront his fears and persist in his endeavors. The relationship between the duo is one of many sources from which Charlie Brown draws his strength of character. Sally doles out wholehearted-yet-conditional support, Lucy contributes unsolicited and dramatic critiques, and Linus offers insightful suggestions.

Over the course of the film, Snoopy shares a similar experience to that of Charlie Brown, as each one's journey requires daring and tenacity. In a fantastic tale centered on finding true love, the World War One Flying Ace— one of Snoopy's multiple alter egos— reprises the iconic battle against his nemesis, the Red Baron. Snoopy lives out his heroic fantasy vicariously by "ringing the doorbell" for Charlie Brown; he coaxes Charlie out of his comfort zone, then leaves him stranded to find success on his own. Both Snoopy and Charlie Brown emerge from their venture a success; Snoopy wins the heart of his imaginary true love, and Charlie Brown learns

that The Little Red-Haired Girl admires him for his natural tendencies. Whether heckled, critiqued, or encouraged by their fellow characters, Charles M. Schulz' beloved duo is a timeless representation of the central message of the Peanuts comics: the omnipotence of love, perseverance, and friendship.

1. Vince Guaraldi's Music in the Original TV Specials

The musical style that Vince Guaraldi came up with for this series of specials is quite unique. The instrumentation is sparse, relying predominantly on a jazz trio (Vince Guaraldi on piano, Fred Marshall on bass and Jerry Granelli playing drums), with a few color instruments interspersed. The themes introduced in early television specials continued to dominate most of the soundtracks that the franchise produced. The most influential of these early specials was "A Charlie Brown Christmas" (1965)¹, the music of which is reprised in "The Peanuts Movie" (2015).

In many cases the flute (or alto flute) is used to play melodies requiring a legato instrument. A good example of this comes from the television special, "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown"², which is the origin of the flying ace versus red baron theme that saturates the new Peanuts movie. After the flying ace is shot down behind enemy lines, the alto flute enters accompanying snoopy as he imagines himself sneaking across the countryside (Appendix A.1 at 00:02:03:29).

¹ Lee, Mendelson. *A Charlie Brown Christmas: The Making of a Tradition*. Zondervan/HarperCollins

² see *Appendix A.1*

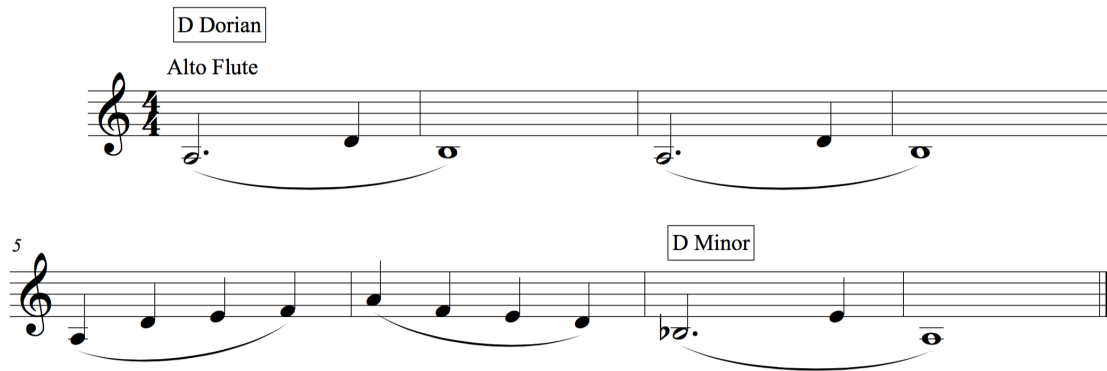


Figure 1 Alto flute them from "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown"

The melody is a haunting one, alternating between D Dorian and D minor. The flute is accompanied by a lonely snare drum, playing brush strokes with the eighth note as the tactus. This is a good example of how light and minimal Vince Guaraldi's textural approach was. The scores that Guaraldi composed also featured a lot of silence. Many cues (such as the battles between the flying ace and the red baron³) are left completely without music.

The jazz pieces from the Charlie Brown television specials and feature films have received the most memorialization in popular culture. Many of these are now considered jazz standards, and are still performed and rearranged regularly by jazz ensembles around the world. A few of the original Vince Guaraldi pieces, like "Linus and Lucy"⁴, "Skating"⁵, and "Christmas Time is Here"⁶, make their way into the new Peanuts Movie. Interestingly, all three of these source pieces come from the same television special: "A Charlie Brown Christmas".

³ see *Appendix A.1*

⁴ see *Appendix B.1*

⁵ see *Appendix B.2*

⁶ see *Appendix B.3*

The comic strips by Charles Schulz and their television renderings have a “playful yet melancholic”⁷ flavor to them that was perfectly complimented by Vince Guaraldi’s “lyrical, jazz inflected”⁸ style. Jazz was a natural stylistic choice in order to approach sadness from a good-humored perspective.

Part of the success of the Peanuts franchise was its ability to speak to a wide audience. The charming characters, drawings and plotlines made it a favorite with children, while the unexpectedly philosophical ponderings of the characters spoke to the adult members of the audience. The music of Vince Guaraldi also added a modern (at the time) appeal that was accepted and loved by all generations. The exclusion of adult characters from the entire Peanuts collection allows for a naïve but truthful look at the human condition. Many times these moments were either underscored with soft, sad jazz piano themes, or left in silence. This can be observed in the opening to “A Charlie Brown Christmas”⁹, where Charlie Brown’s ponderings about why he is not happy despite the holiday season is accompanied by the smooth jazz track, “Christmas Time is Here”. The result is quite melancholic for a children’s show and this will prove to be a key difference between the peanuts shows produced in the 1900’s and The Peanuts Movie (2015).

⁷ Poniewazik, James. "The Good and the Grief." *Time International* (Business Source Complete), no. 26 (December 1999): 154.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ see *Appendix A.2*

2. Modernization in the Peanuts Movie

In order to understand the differences between the new soundtrack and those by Vince Guaraldi, we must also have a grasp on the modernization in the animation itself. Many elements have undergone renovation, although Blue Sky Studios strives to respect the artistic style of Charles Schulz.



The initially hand drawn art is masterfully adapted to CGI graphics, but care is also taken to render facial details to “Schulz-style lines rather than uncanny detail”¹⁰. The landscapes, however, have received a major upgrade, and the color scheme of the whole movie is far more vibrant. Throughout this paper we will also be discussing how the thematic materials and plotline have been given a brighter and more positive shimmer. In *The Peanuts Movie*, Charlie Brown gets disheartened several times, but the bigger focus is actually on his “courage to persevere”. Compare this outlook with the more pessimistic – or arguably realist - one found in the original comic strips (Figure 2).

¹⁰ Hassenger, Jesse. *A.V. Club*. 11 05, 2015. <http://www.avclub.com/review/peanuts-movie-mostly-preserves-voice-charles-schul-227914> (accessed 06 28, 2016).

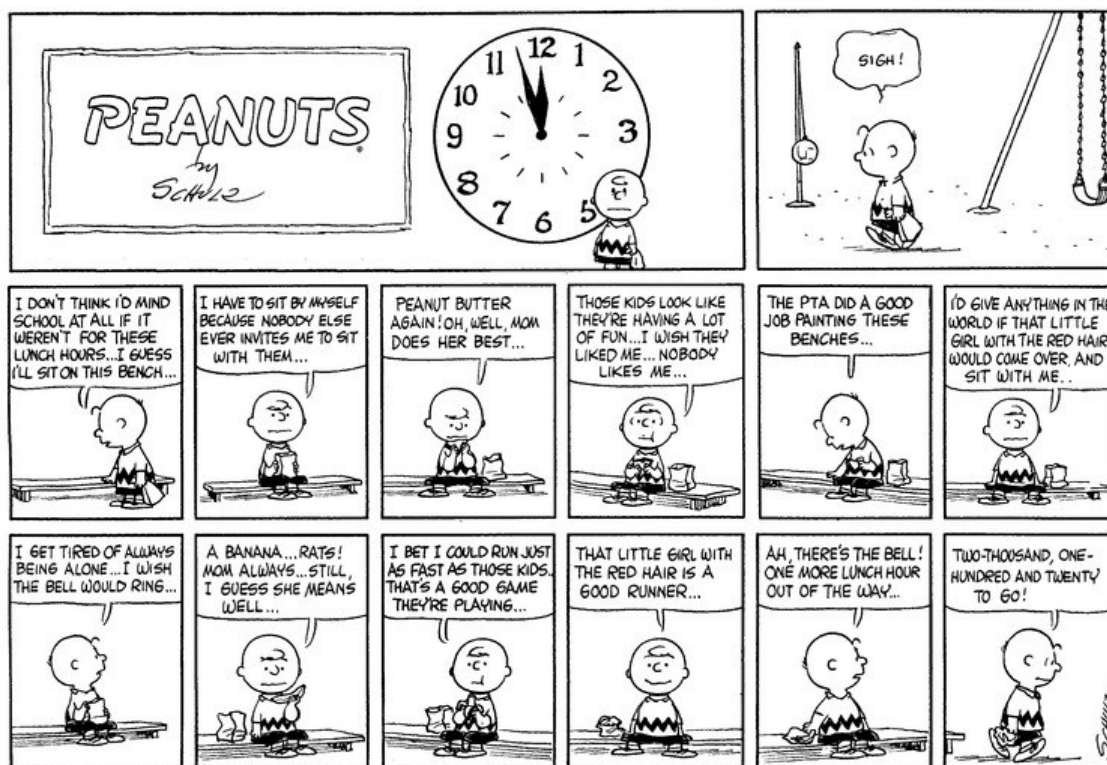


Figure 2 Comic strip by Charles Schulz

The colorful palette used by the animators in *The Peanuts Movie* is mirrored in Christophe Beck's music, adding a layer of optimism to the film that was not as evident in the earlier productions. As aforementioned, Vince Guaraldi primarily used a jazz trio. Perhaps if *The Peanuts Movie* had been conceived as a television special, this instrumentation would have been appropriate; however, today's audience is accustomed to hearing even the most playfully animated films accompanied by huge cinematic orchestras. Modern cinema relies on a very dramatic style of scoring. In order to make *The Peanuts Movie* appropriate for a modern audience, Christophe Beck had to amplify the range of emotions covered by the score; moreover, the emotions had to be over-dramatized in comparison to what Vince Guaraldi produced back in the 1900s. Besides the intensity of the music, a modern film also calls for more constant scoring. *The Peanuts Movie* is saturated in music, and the musical spaces that are left are always relatively short. From a contemporary viewpoint, the early television

specials seem uncomfortably empty. Referring back to the example used earlier from “It’s the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown”¹¹, we notice that the entire flying ace sequence – 3 minutes in length – is left without music. Later we will be discussing how Christophe Beck changes these action scenes, dramatizing them, and adding more vitality.

The choice of composer for *The Peanuts Movie* speaks volumes about the studio’s vision for the soundtrack. Back in the 1960’s, Lee Mendelson, producer for the television specials contacted Guaraldi to score the Christmas special. He was primarily seduced by Vince Guaraldi’s jazz playing, and songwriting. In this new reboot, Blue Sky Studios chose not to work with a jazz musician, but instead to work with a film composer. Additionally, Christophe Beck is known for his work on many comedy films, a genre that involves a large quantity of music, and a strong marriage between the visuals and the score. It can be deduced that Blue Sky Studios wanted a more traditional, and dramatic film score, steering away from the songlike soundtracks that Guaraldi created. Much of Guaraldi’s work for the Peanuts franchise was composed and recorded without visuals, and then placed into the episodes after the fact. This is quite contrary to the job of a film composer, such as Christophe Beck, where appropriation into the film is paramount.

¹¹ see *Appendix A.1*

3. Categories of Music Used in the Peanuts Movie

A) Popular Music

Animation movies are generally geared towards a younger audience. However, we've already discussed how the philosophical topics addressed by Schulz's characters also speak to adults. Furthermore, the original audiences for the television specials are much older now, and consequently the support of the older demographic for *The Peanuts Movie* was more assured than the support of the younger generation. Hollywood commonly addresses this problem by contracting celebrities from pop culture. Celebrity actors are a given, but often studios opt to also add pop music written by artists who are currently big on the scene. *The Peanuts Movie* features two songs written and performed by pop celebrity Meghan Trainor. Her appearance in this film comes only a year after her popularity exploded with the hit song "All About That Bass" (2014). Meghan Trainor's style has no correlation with the original music for the television specials, and it is clear that her contribution was largely an attempt to get more kids excited to see the movie. Nonetheless, the songs do help to modernize the film. Using popular music from our current time helps to convince the audience that the film is taking place in the present, and therefore the viewer can more easily relate to the story.

"Better When I'm Dancing"¹², is used for the dance competition that Charlie Brown has been ardently preparing for. It's a clever placement choice since it closely mirrors the type of music that is presently played at school dances. The song is used

¹² see *Appendix A.4*

as source music, which slightly minimizes the stylistic discrepancy with Christophe Beck's music. Nonetheless, some critics felt that this "bouncy, dance-pop contribution"¹³ feels a bit out of place in an otherwise "organic and affectionately composed"¹⁴ score. Admittedly, the palette for this track is vastly different from the rest of the music in the film. It is almost purely electronic, while Christophe Beck's music doesn't even venture into the hybrid territory. Luckily the music editor, Fernand Bos, seamlessly adjusted the form of Trainor's song, so that it functions well with the action on screen.

As the song continues, Charlie Brown starts to get into a groove on the dance floor. He realizes that he may win the competition and get the chance to dance with The Little Red Haired Girl. Christophe Beck uses this realization to introduce the orchestra (Appendix A.4 at 00:01:48:00), and as the orchestra fades in, the song slowly disappears. Initially the addition of high strings helps to amplify the sense of hopefulness, but unfortunately it seems that Charlie Brown is inherently unlucky as he slips on some spilled punch, and accidentally kicks of his shoe. Coinciding with this moment, Beck introduces the low brass outlining a diminished triad (Appendix A.4 at 00:01:51:15). The string section crescendos on a minor third interval with both notes trilling at the half step until the shoe hits the sprinkler, and everyone starts screaming.

Perhaps the popular music chosen for *The Peanuts Movie* is not the subtlest aspect of the film, but it is still treated with finesse, and it adds a fashionable element that arguably could not have been achieved with a purely orchestral score.

¹³ Giardina, Carolyn. "Don't Screw It Up." *Hollywood Reporter* (Business Source Complete) 421, no. 38 (11 2015): 42.

¹⁴ Ibid.

B) Vince Guaraldi's Music

Vince Guaraldi's work for the peanuts franchise is so iconic that Blue Sky Studios would certainly have invited a lot of critique if a sequel didn't make any reference to his music. In an article about the reuse of classic television themes in film reboots, Jon Burlingame quotes Christophe Beck saying that there was never any question about incorporating Guaraldi's music from the cartoons¹⁵. Beck describes Guaraldi's music as "tuneful", and "catchy" and he also mentions his admiration for the "sophisticated jazz harmonies and sense of melancholy"¹⁶. Considering these statements, it is not a surprise that *The Peanuts Movie* has many moments where tribute is paid to the legendary jazz musician, either through reference to his style, or through direct placement of his music into the movie.

The first moment occurs at the beginning of the movie, directly succeeding the studio logos. Here there is a literal insertion of Vince Guaraldi's "Skating"¹⁷ (recreated by jazz pianist David Benoit) from *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. It accompanies a slow shot of the snowfall, with Woodstock playfully stumbling his way through the snowflakes and eventually plumping down onto Snoopy's snow covered nose. The use of Guaraldi's music in conjunction with the characteristically wintry scene, and loveable characters, Snoopy and Woodstock, immediately draws the audience into a sentimental mood; furthermore, having acknowledged the classic theme, Christophe Beck is left with more freedom in the rest of the score.

¹⁵ Burlingame, Jon. *Variety*. 08 19, 2015. <http://variety.com/2015/artisans/production/composers-classic-tv-themes-film-reboots-1201572881/> (accessed 06 28, 2016).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ see *Appendix A.3*

The version of “Skating” used in *The Peanuts Movie* is almost identical to the original, although some alterations have been made. For example, the tempo has been slowed down marginally in order for the music to align properly with the film.

Of course, Christophe Beck has to introduce his own musical style at some point and this is done with finesse. After Woodstock lands on Snoopy’s nose, a harp glissando prepares the listener for the orchestra’s entrance on cue with the titles (Appendix A.3 at 00:00:29:28). Here the violins double the piano, playing cyclic thirds, while the horns enter with a countermelody, and the tubular bells resonate in the distance.

The transition from old material to new is impeccable. Along with the orchestra’s introduction, Christophe Beck also alters the harmonic motion after the titles, bringing the music to a cadence (Appendix A.3 at 00:00:37:13) that didn’t exist originally, since the original “Skating” track¹⁸ modulated at this point. With the cadence, the violins continue to sustain, and slowly the sound of alarms ringing throughout the neighborhood cover them. In the original track, “Skating”, the music skipped the cadence and proceeded to a jazzier, more improvisatory style. It is important that Christophe Beck decided to cut the music at this point. Although reference is made to Vince Guaraldi’s music, Beck takes care not to let the score wander too far into the jazz world, which would create an evident divide between the old music and Christophe Beck’s orchestral style.

¹⁸ see *Appendix B.2*

Another example of Vince Guaraldi's music inserted into the new movie occurs when the gang gets together for a dance. The track "Linus and Lucy"¹⁹ complements this scene and is performed by jazz pianist David Benoit. In an interview, Charles Schulz' son, Craig Schulz (who is also the co-writer and producer for this film) says: "We knew that there were any number of iconic things that were needed in the movie, that people were going to look forward to. Top of the list was Guaraldi's 'Linus and Lucy.'" This clarifies the pressure that composers and production companies feel when creating remakes of old popular works. In *The Peanuts Movie*, Blue Sky Studios and Christophe Beck do a fabulous job of finding the proper moments to incorporate Guaraldi's music in a way that seems organic.

C) Original Music by Christophe Beck

Although some tributes and similarities to Vince Guaraldi can be found, the vast majority of the score is entirely Christophe Beck. The palette he uses is mainly orchestral, although there are exceptions where he adopts a more chamber, jazz-type of ensemble. Besides the instrumentation choice, I'd like to focus on two other elements that Beck brings to the table. As a highly acclaimed film composer, Beck manages to bring an excitement, dynamism, and continuity to *The Peanuts Movie* that was often lacking in the original productions. The score is carefully crafted to follow the contours of the film, which immediately captures the audience's attention, and helps to propel the drama forward. The second component that Christophe Beck adds to this score is a strong focus on motivic development. Obviously, in the television specials, Guaraldi would reprise themes like "Linus and Lucy" in different places

¹⁹ see *Appendix B.1*

throughout the episodes, but it never had the same importance in terms of character development. Since a lot of Guaraldi's music was not directly scored to picture, the connection between the recapitulating thematic fragments and the film were never as strong.

Previously we looked at the flying-ace scene from "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown"²⁰. The lack of music makes these scenes feel very empty, and dull. As a modern day viewer, it doesn't feel as though the video is taking you on an emotional journey. Snoopy's encounters with the flying-ace are also incorporated in to the new movie as a constant subplot. Consistent with the modernization of the film, Christophe Beck makes the decision to score them with a cinematic approach.

The track "Curse You Red Baron"²¹ is taken from one of these scenes. After Snoopy's love, Fifi, has been captured, Snoopy sets off in pursuit of the Red Baron. The airborne chase that ensues is supported by a large orchestra, with heavy emphasis placed on the brass. Often the strings function as the underlying motion, performing ostinatos or other rhythmic figures. Woodwinds double string and brass parts at the octave for additional color, but they also add contrasting interludes to the drama. This back and forth motion between light and heavy textures is necessary to bring out the comedy in the situation: Snoopy is, after all, chasing a fighter plane with his doghouse as transportation. Continuing to hunt the Red Baron, Snoopy ascends parallel to the Eiffel tower. Oil grease falls from the opposing plane and hits his glasses. Christophe Beck withdraws most of the orchestra, and the flutes perform a playful staccato figure

²⁰ see *Appendix A.1*

²¹ see *Appendix B.5 and Appendix A.5*

accompanied by pizzicato strings (Appendix A.5 at 00:00:18:00). As the pursuit continues, Beck rebuilds the tension, but the music often changes character completely at a moments notice in order to highlight certain events in the film. For example, Snoopy's "plane" gets stuck on top of the Eiffel Tower, and the orchestra is suddenly silent. Soon the horns enter again as Snoopy nervously tries to dislodge the vehicle and get back into pursuit (Appendix A.5 at 00:00:27:00). The cloud cover darkens and as Snoopy's reactions become more wary, the music again follows suit moving into a G minor tonality (Appendix A.5 at 00:00:47:00). The violins play a figure revolving around the tonic and the leading tone, and as the view clears, we see a world war two landscapes revealed below.

Christophe Beck highlights this moment with an ominous brass swell. The Red Baron's wheels slowly descend into the screen, and the trombones play a haunting melody to match. Beck continues to set the dark mood for a while, but it is quickly abandoned as Snoopy comedically tries to dart out of the enemy spyglasses view in a series of unlikely maneuvers (Appendix A.5 at 00:01:16:00). The marriage between the film and the music in this cue is so incredibly detailed that an entire essay could be written on it alone. Although the music for the red baron scenes is arguably the most intricate, Christophe Beck brings the same compositional finesse to the entire score.

Many musical themes and motifs are used throughout the film. This partially serves to create continuity, but it also helps to make the score more memorable, and to draw connections between different events in the story line. Several themes continue to develop throughout *The Peanuts Movie*, forming the backbone of the score.

At the beginning of the movie “Snow Day”²² paints the picture of childhood excitement and Beck catches the audiences attention immediately though the development of this youthful theme.

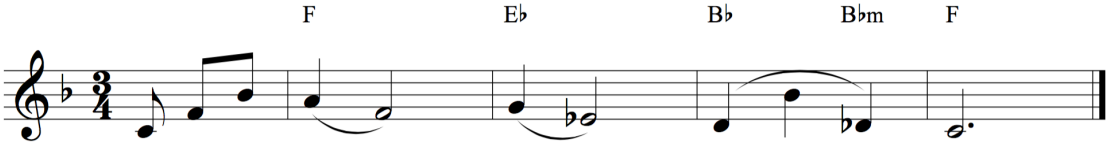


Figure 3 "Snow Day"

“Snow Day” continues to return whenever there is a hopeful moment in the film. A significant topic in *The Peanuts Movie* is resilience, and most of the moments where resilience is demonstrated are accompanied by this melody. For example, when Charlie Brown is at the baseball pitch practicing on his own, he says to himself “Charlie Brown is not a quitter”. At that exact moment the “Snow Day” theme is played by the horns, clearly penetrating through the string pad. After Charlie Brown falls in love with The Little Red Haired Girl, he seeks out Lucy’s psychological advice (another common scenario from the comic strips). During his talk with her, Charlie Brown comes to the conclusion that he needs to become a winner in order for The Little Red Haired Girl to notice him. Again you can hear the “Snow Day” melody quietly in the background. These thematic associations are often subtle, but they help to clarify the dramatic web of the film.

This movie revolves around Charlie Brown’s mission to capture the attention of The Little Red Haired Girl. Initially he tries to mold himself into a winner, hoping that this will convince her to like him. In the end, she recognizes him despite all of his failures and mishaps. The movie ends with her giving a speech about his character,

²² see Appendix A.6

honesty, and caring which she reveals is what she truly admires. The main theme outlining this youthful love story is “Charlie Brown in Love”.



Figure 4 "Charlie Brown in Love"

There is one notable similarity between this theme and “Snow Day”. In mm.3 and 4 (Figure 4) the minor and major sixth leaps are closely related to the same pitch class intervals in mm. 3 of “Snow Day” (Figure 3). Furthermore, the harmonic motion from minor iv to the tonic is identical in both themes. These shared characteristics help to create the homogeneity in the score. “Charlie Brown in Love” is the most used theme in this movie. It appears multiple times at different tempos, in different keys, and with different orchestrations allowing the theme to perfectly match the emotions needed for the scene. The theme naturally makes its premier when Charlie Brown sees The Little Red Haired Girl for the first time (Appendix A.7 at 00:00:16:00). Christophe Beck doesn’t allow the theme to cadence yet, and so this only counts as a partial introduction. It is orchestrated to sound very romantic, with the violins playing a lush version of the melody, representing Charlie Browns immediate infatuation. The boldness and passion quickly wanes when The Little Red Haired Girls glance sends Charlie Brown retreating behind his desk. The beautiful but timid celeste takes over the melody, a perfect partnership to the images of Charlie Brown hiding shyly behind his desk.

Many renditions of the theme follow, always pertaining to Charlie Brown's dream of impressing The Little Red Haired Girl. Eventually Charlie Brown is lucky enough to become her partner for a book report. Unfortunately she is out of town, so he takes it upon himself to do the project for the both of them. After completing the lengthy task, he finally gets the opportunity to talk to The Little Red Haired Girl, but by a twist of fate the report is destroyed. She responds very empathetically, but Charlie Brown is overwhelmed by a sense of defeat. The piano outlines his sadness, playing a melancholic rendition of "Charlie Brown in Love"²³. The string section sustains quiet notes in the background, but the cue is essentially a piano solo. Beck cleverly mirrors Charlie Brown's forlorn emotions, and the sad irony of the situation; The Little Red Haired Girl is finally talking to Charlie Brown, and noticing him, but he is too caught up in the loss of the report to realize.

D) Vince Guaraldi's Materials Incorporated Into Music by Christophe Beck

There are a few elements in the soundtrack that showcase Christophe Beck's ability to incorporate Guaraldi-like aesthetics into his own works. There are three arrangements in the film, both featuring chamber ensembles that more closely reflect the music from old television specials. The first arrangement is of Vince Guaraldi's "Skating" theme²⁴, primarily utilizing mallet instruments (vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel, tubular bells). Some of the original smooth jazz flavor is maintained, but both the instrumentation and the pulsating rhythmic content lends a more modern edge to the arrangement. Nonetheless, the melody from Guaraldi's "Skating" and interludes of jazz like lines (primarily on the vibraphone) give away the origins of this piece.

²³ see *Appendix A.8*

²⁴ see *Appendix B.4*

The second arrangement is of “Christmas Time Is Here”²⁵. Christophe Beck leaves his mark, with an unconventional ensemble: violin, classical guitar, vibraphone, upright bass, and cajon. Despite the eccentric ensemble choice, the harmonic content, and light jazz flavor clearly emulates Vince Guaraldi.

Throughout the film, the piano is featured, often as a soloist. Although the content that the piano is given is often not jazz-flavored, the choice of instrument still imitates the focus on piano in the original productions. The third arrangement is a good example of this. Christophe Beck creates a positively hypnotizing, and beautifully sad rendition of “Linus and Lucy”²⁶. The original was also piano centric, and Beck's arrangement mainly serves to change the emotional connotation of the music.

4. Conclusion

Creating a remake of a movie is always challenging due to the various expectations from different parties. If the original version was widely popular, it only amplifies the difficulty for the composer and for the filmmakers. Analyzing Christophe Beck's score to *The Peanuts Movie* we can see that there are four different routes that the music can take. Innovation is important, since a successful film score should not be a direct replication of previous work. Nonetheless, pure replication can also be a useful tool in maintaining the nostalgia that the franchise has harvested. Old fans will likely be attending the new movie expecting to hear pieces of the original soundtracks, and if these are appropriately incorporated, they can be a huge benefit. Of course, an

²⁵ see Appendix B.6

²⁶ see Appendix B.7

ideal solution is to blend both innovation and reiteration. Christophe Beck deftly achieves this through his choice of instruments and the three arrangements of Guaraldi's music that he included. The score sounds undeniably unique, and it maintains many elements of his own personality despite the fact that it also makes acknowledgements to Vince Guaraldi's work. Different film projects will of course require varying combinations between innovation and reiteration, but the necessity to analyze these two components when you approach a project like *The Peanuts Movie* is undeniable. Christophe Beck score is a masterful example of how this balance can be achieved, satisfying as many members of the audience as possible, while also bringing the best out of the film.

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