The role of John Williams' music in Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan

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Abstract. It can be said that music is an essential part of a film, and a good commercial film has good music to render it to a large extent. There are three levels of music appreciation in film: analyzing the music itself, incorporating the music into the film world, and describing the audience experience. The Second World War is unprecedented in human history, and the film industry has made a variety of films to commemorate and reflect on this war, so that future generations will never have to repeat the mistakes. Spielberg's Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan, for example, both presented the tragic history of the Second World War to audiences in documentary form. This article will critically analyze the role of music in these two films.

1. Introduction

It is indicated that music as something that adds to the visual effect [7]. Additionally, it is reviewed that music could induce emotions in humans to a great extent [6]. In addition to its emotional impact, music can also convey meaning to some extent [8]. For example, by setting the emotional tone of the film, the life state, cognitive pattern and observation of the protagonist, the film can prompt the audience to pay attention to the information consistent with its values [2]. Arguably, music is an essential part of a film, and a good commercial film has appropriate music to render to a large extent. There are three levels of music appreciation in the film: analyzing the music itself, integrating music in the world of the film and describing the audience experience. Contemporary film musicologists have formed a different model for the operation of film music, which is regarded as an interdependent and complementary element in the film narrative system. The Second World War was unprecedented in the history of mankind, and the film industry has made films on a variety of subjects to commemorate and reflect on this war so that future generations will never have to repeat it. Spielberg's Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan, for example, both present that harrowing history of World War II to audiences in a similar way to a documentary. John Williams also won international awards for the films’ soundtrack as the creator of the soundtrack for both films. Although both films are based on the Second World War, the expressions are slightly different and the types of soundtracks vary. Therefore, this essay will compare and critically analyze the role of John Williams' soundtrack in the films Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan based on the academic discourse of the film music.

1) The Role of Music In Describing The Scene concluded that music can adjust the audience's perception of movies [3]. In other words, the soundtrack in the film can greatly enhance the visual effect, the "added value" mentioned by [4], creating by sound effects and music. In this way, music appreciation is closely related to the perception of musical events. More specifically, the emotional response of the audience is sad not because the music is sad, but because the music takes sadness as part of it. The soundtrack of the film can make the audience generate corresponding emotions while watching the corresponding scenes. That is to say, the same music is not the same, and the emotions should be different. In addition, listening to music as a sound event is part of music appreciation. The way people perceive everyday sounds is largely related to the way they perceive music. Although music can be said to develop and cultivate our ability to hear, it cannot negate the inherent elements in our auditory system [5]. Moreover, it is mentioned that a sudden crescendo helps to describe a dynamic change in intensity, in sync with the activity of the sound coming from the listener [7]. Music, a sound event that attracts attention. At the same time, it is a regulatory mechanism that alerts the attention system by telling the audience that something new is happening. Therefore, the background music of a movie is usually given a specific meaning by the composer in the scene. This section will compare and contrast the film Saving Private Ryan with the film Schindler's List of expressions in the background music created by John Williams when describing the horrors of the war. Omaha beach, a piece of nine-minute music composed by John Williams of the first 26 minutes of Saving Private Ryan, describes the most brutal part of the Normandy battle: the Omaha landing. After the fight, the camera goes from captain Miller's shaking hands to his eyes as the
dialogue ‘that is quite a view’, ‘Yes, it is. Quite a view’ appears, and the slow and deep tunes of *Omaha Beach* appear. This plot is the basic norm of classical film audio-visual language. As the last shot of the conclusion, it should be the big scene, to show the atmosphere and scale of the whole war and to have a clear sense of ending. More specifically, accompanied by the washing of the sea, the bodies mixed with the blood water float on the sea. The music moves slowly with the camera, like silent language, telling about the cruelty of the war and the tragic casualties to the audience. In addition, the big picture is in motion all the time- a constant push shot from above. Therefore, the presence of *Omaha Beach* here is not only a function of the shape and atmosphere of the last big shot, but also has a clear narrative meaning. Then, the movement begins to turn over a corpse and begins to push down on the camera, making a motion similar to a drop shot, which slowly descends and lands on a close shot: a fallen soldier's backpack with his name written on it: 'Ryan. S'. John Williams' masterful use of the symphony reached its climax, satisfying both the function of scanning the scene to express the atmosphere and the narrative information, one of the Ryan brothers had been killed. The role of music here is not only in line with the basic requirements of classical audiovisual language, but also to enhance the narrative, and more directly and quickly related to the next paragraph.

*Immolation* is the meaning of martyrdom and sacrifice. This piece of music describes the scene that the Nazis burn the Jews slaughtered by them. The bodies were slaughtered, and the ashes were burned everywhere. Unlike *Saving Private Ryan*, which is all about slow symphonies about dead bodies in war, this song is slightly different in its delivery. First of all, the first half of the music is mainly laid out with strings. In the sound of the Nazi soldiers, the Jews dragged the bodies of their compatriots out of the soil. Secondly, as the movement of digging and dragging the body quickened, the rhythm of the music gradually increased, and at this time a magnificent chorus was added, which appeared somewhat transcendent through ‘with our life, we give life’. different from the direct description of casualties in *Saving Private Ryan*, with a strong color of anti-war, John Williams' music in this movie, the war in the straightforward way displayed in front of people, not with the mood, the music here form a mind beyond death, expressed the hope that soul rest for vision. It is worth mentioning that the only bright color in this black and white film, the little red girl, when Schindler saw her body appeared on the trailer, the chorus sounded again, and the camera turned to Schindler's face, giving him a 15-second close-up, indicating that the protagonist's psychology had changed. Once the red little girl who escaped from the German army is the only bright color in this film, but now it is presented in front of the protagonist in the state of the corpse. As the music gradually fades away, it sets the stage for his subsequent rescue of the Jews. It can be seen that in the part of describing the tragic war, music plays a prominent role in scene description to a large extent and serves as a link between the preceding and the following. But the film *Saving Private Ryan* tends to show the casualties of the war directly in front of the audience, which is intuitive and tragic, with anti-war color. On the contrary, the film *Schindler's List*, together with its relatively insincere and naive imagery, is not as good as the more challenging modernist film's aesthetic treatment of the holocaust, which is often emotionally inaccessible. Thus, despite the overstatement by some viewers of *Schindler's List* of Jewish survivors, it seems more like a biography of Schindler than a record of the Second World War. But its straight-to-the-point narrative, and the lack of an emotional treatment of the music itself, make the film more acceptable than *Saving Private Ryan*.

2) The Role of Music in Expressing The Emotional Theme

As stated by [1], the role of World War II on film was to serve as a frame of reference for justice wars. Because of this, the binary relationship between good and evil makes most of the film music related to the more ambiguous conflicts of war. In other words, music not only defines emotions, but to a large extent creates them. Musical traditions become ingrained in a culture, affecting listeners as a collective musical unconscious, whether they are conscious of the tradition or not. Regarding a musical convention as a cultural shorthand that the listener does not need to consciously recognize to produce a predictable response. It is noted that in Hollywood movies, brass instruments often symbolize heroism [9]. At the beginning of the film *Saving Private Ryan*, a magnificent sound and painting scene is created through brass and other instruments, which expresses director Steven Spielberg's affirmation of the spirit of American soldiers in the world war ii. However, *Schindler's List* expresses its emotional themes in a way that is different from *Saving Private Ryan*’s grand growth, and instead uses a gentle but firm violin playing by a Jewish musician particularly. Specific tunes and specific places can be invoked or hidden, as the musicological basis of specific folk music is exploited to produce appropriate original music. Tunes rich in regional color can be invoked in the film, that is to say, the original film music can produce satisfactory results due to the participation of specific folk music. Moreover, unique rhythms and dance forms can be incorporated into both the real and the real [1]. In *Schindler's List* theme by John Williams, the performance by the Jewish violinist Perlman speaks more about the killing and persecution of the Jewish people during World War II.

The music *Revisiting Normandy* was first brought to life in the film *Saving Private Ryan*. The camera moves from the American flag fluttering in the wind to the body of an old man and follows it to Captain Miller's grave. The slow music brings the narrative back to the day of D-day, June 6, 1944. Trombone melodious voice first appeared, it is worth noting that the first 30 seconds are all trombone solo, melodic voice to create a solemn atmosphere. Moreover, After two beats, add a grace note, followed by a quaver and a double beat, a b note. Gradually, the repeated drum sounds, adding a sense of complexity to the variety of Musical Instruments. At the same time, the expression of emotion also reaches a climax that is, telling the story in a way that expresses the memory of the martyrs. However, when the camera follows the old man
on his way to the cemetery, the music with brass as the main instrument becomes strings, and the rhythm becomes more lively. Further, this quickening pace depicts the complex emotions of old Ryan, the excitement of meeting his benefactor and the sadness of thinking that he had died for his country. Finally, he came to Captain Miller's grave and music style changed again, become deep, melancholy, music properly foil Ryan's heart complex emotions, silent language can contribute to express the heart of sadness and miss Captain Miller. After this, the rhythm of the music drops again, becomes cold and chilling, thus the nostalgia part is officially over, the tragic war scene is about to come, the music is also over. In general, the background music composed by John Williams draws the audience's attention and creates the atmosphere of a nostalgic scene by utilizing the power of music to convey and express emotions. As mentioned by [10], Spielberg sets the emotional tone of the movie by sending his homage to Americans killed in world war II at the beginning.

As for the Schindler's List, the theme song features a large number of violin solos by Itzhak Perlman, a famous Jewish violinist who is best suited to perform the music for such a film. The Theme From Schindler's List at the end of the film was composed mainly of piano and violin strings, with John Williams for the piano and Perlman for the violin. With the sound of piano and violin, the camera moves slowly over the tombstones of the murdered Jews. Music here is moving in silence, in this way of persecution, showing the tragedy of the Jewish nation. John Williams' original song in Schindler's List is not about expressing emotion, but rather about telling the story and history directly, not the heroism symbolized by the brass voice in Saving Private Ryan. In addition, at the end of the film, when 'Schindler's Jews' and their descendants reverently place stones on Schindler's tombstone, the theme song is played again slowly and presented as a violin solo. At this time, the film picture changes from black edge to color. The emotion conveyed by strings is no longer solemn and stirring, but becomes light and bright together with the picture that changes into color. In this way, Perlman's solo slowly tells the story of the massacre of the Jewish people with regional uniqueness, while the grand and deep melody of the symphony expresses the survivors' gratitude to Schindler. Although the director does not emphasize what is black and white, the highlight of the theme song, also expresses sympathy for the Jewish people and the theme of anti-war.

3) The Role of Music in Character Development

The film usually starts from the aspects of language, appearance and occupation to shape the external image of the characters, while the inner image of the characters is completed by psychological description. Music as an effective means of shaping the inner image of characters, its close combination with the picture can promote the three-dimensional, life-like image of characters. Moreover, music itself is a carrier that can accommodate a variety of emotions. Through different adjustments and combinations of the tone, melody and orchestration of music, different emotions can be expressed and the different characters can be shaped [7]. Such as slow with the singing melody suitable for shaping a gentle and elegant figure image; the rhythm of the strong melody is suitable for the shaping of lively and cheerful character image; the orchestrator timbre is suitable for the old and crafty characters. In addition, music can effectively sublimate the characters while shaping their images, and make them more in line with the theme of the film. This section will analyze and compare the movies Saving Private Ryan and Schindler's List around John Williams' music in character-building.

Hymn to the fallen, which is the leitmotif of the Saving Private Ryan, appears at the end of the film. After Captain Miller blows up a tiger 3 tank with an m1911.45 pistol, his life is almost over. Young Ryan comes to see his wounds, but Miller knows he can't do anything, so he stops him. "James Earn it," Captain Miller whispers to Ryan, as the music begins to play. Along with the commander's soft voice, this soft, lyrical, warm, yet sad music contributes to shape the greatness of American service members who have sacrificed for their country. In other words, even if eight men were sacrificed to rescue one soldier, it reflects the spirit of America's military at war. Then, Ryan gawks at the dead Captain Miller, slowly morphing into old Ryan, as he gazes at Miller's tombstone. The memory ends, but the music doesn't stop. The war was won, because of the lives of good soldiers like Captain Miller. Soft strings along with the gradual flow of the horn at the same time to express the respect and memory of the martyrs, the result is that Ryan was finally successfully rescued, it is relieved that there is a kind of indescribable heavy.,

As for Schindler's List, in more detail, after the German army surrendered, Schindler, a businessman turned war criminal, received a gold ring from 'Schindler's Jew', which says, 'whatever saves one life, saves the world entire.' The violin, played by the Jewish violinist Perlman, began to play again, slowly but surely, to match this Jewish saying, enough to express the survivors' respect for Schindler. Furthermore, when Schindler said 'I Could Have Done More' when he crashed beside the car, the performance of the theme song was the most pathetic. The theme song was played by a Jewish musician to express respect for a German, which not only expressed the sublimation of Schindler's character, but also expressed people's sense of relief and detachment to a large extent. In contrast to Saving Private Ryan, it is clear that the German army and the American army are opposite through music, good and evil. The theme song of Schindler's List at the end of the film is more like an expression of the director's respect and respect for Oskar Schindler, which has nothing to do with two nationalities. It can be said that Schindler was a bright spot among the hellish Germans at that time.

2. Conclusion

This article analyzes the role of John Williams' music in Schindler's List and Saving Private Ryan from three aspects: scene description, emotion setting and character sublimation. Similarly, these two films described the tragic situation in the Second World War in the form of documentaries, and expressed the theme the director wanted to express through the characterization of
characters. Yet most music of Saving Private Ryan is grand symphonies, which is the best genre of John Williams's music, to deepen the horrors of war and celebrate the spirit of America's soldiers. The theme song of Schindler's List is mainly performed by the Jewish violinist Perlman, which slowly tells the story of how Jews were persecuted by the Nazi soldiers. Thus, the regional color in the score can more easily strike a chord with the corresponding audience, which is better than the musical expression of Saving Private Ryan. Yet the leitmotif of the music in Saving Private Ryan could easily describe the true account of the carnage, which is better than the music in Schindler's List emphasizes on survivors and often referred to by some viewers as a biopic of Jewish gratitude to Schindler.

References