Musical sources and 'thereness': The location of inspiration in cinematic adaptations of *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*

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Although never featured explicitly in adaptations of this much-adapted text, the opening gambit of Gaston Leroux's novel is fundamental not only to his enterprise but to that of many attempts to render it as cinema. In an atmospheric *Avant-propos* the narrator describes his discovery of the Phantom's remains in the depths of the Paris Opéra in 1907, about twenty-five years after the events he is about to relate.[1] Not only a natural, if macabre, development of a familiar trope of gothic style (the story pieced together from surviving physical sources), this is the beginning of a meditation on the nature of musical inspiration sustained in different forms throughout the narrative. The circumstance is the real historical interment of a time capsule containing recordings of contemporary stars of the lyric stage, due to be opened a century later,[2] but what he may be read as taking from this act of operatic reification is not so much the commemoration of a stable repertory and performance practice as the question of how to choose exactly what is worth commemorating: the difference, in other words, between what is merely representative and what is transcendent. During the course of the novel Leroux pursues this mainly in the area of vocal and dramatic artistry, but the narrative potential of the Phantom's compositional gifts—which the novel would have us believe are extraordinary and which are themselves reified in the shape of the score of his unfinished masterpiece *Don Juan Triumphant*, frustratingly still to be located as the novel ends—is never far from the surface. *Don Juan Triumphant* is the piece that the Phantom has been working on for twenty years, convinced he will finish it only in his last days on earth. It is a much darker score than Mozart's *opera buffa*—music that burns, as he tells the heroine Christine Daaé, "music that consumes all those who come near it." Later she describes the music in question,

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[1] For a full description of the *Avant-propos*, see Cormac Newark, "'Vous qui faites l'endormie': The Phantom and the buried voices of the Paris Opéra," *19th-Century Music* 33/1 (2009), 62-78.
[2] See blog.bnf.fr/voix/index.php/2009/03/18/le-feuilleton-des-urnes-de-lopera-1/.

which she has overheard the Phantom playing to himself, and sure enough it is an overwhelming, painfully enlightening experience: "a long, terrible, and magnificent sob."[3]

It is surely the challenge of representing such an exalted work that has prompted so many artistic responses to Leroux, in so many other media—above all adaptations for the screen. Because the earliest of these date from only a few years after the publication of the novel, and because new ones have appeared regularly ever since, together they represent a coherent—if geographically rather wide-ranging—reception history of the ideas about opera for which Leroux's novel is itself already a kind of repository. More important, that reception history is one in which the visual and aural implications of his various textual stagings of operatic performance have in some way to be worked out. But as well as addressing the same critical questions Leroux did—to do with articulating the difference between good and exceptional performance, and between musical attention and musical transport—the adaptations must also negotiate the gap between the Phantom's own mysterious score and those that, like the weary warhorses of *grand opéra* featured in the novel, seemed to Leroux and many of his contemporaries emphatically to have *lost* their mystery. The logical conclusion is that the screen adaptations of *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* must all, in one way or another, not only assert but *show* the difference between a performance of (say) *Faust* that is (say) full of elite singers but still embodies everything that is wrong with opera, and one that is both inspired and inspiring. They thus have something important to communicate about changing attitudes to "the" repertory—in terms of historicizing audience attention and its aesthetic and institutional politics, but also of which works might belong in it and indeed which of the other genres featured (operetta, musical theater, pop and rock) might be similarly structured. More intriguing still, screen adaptations must often also place before those watching and listening (and no longer just reading) the Phantom's *Don Juan Triumphant*, or some analogue of it appropriate to the setting, realizing on the stage the new and radical operatic experience Leroux only hinted at on the page.

In this essay I will examine some examples of screen adaptations where this

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[3] *The Essential Phantom of the Opera*, 178–182 (Chapter 13).

realization is attempted—although, perhaps unsurprisingly, not always in the terms Leroux appeared to have in mind. I will focus on the three in which the score of *Don Juan Triumphant* (or its equivalent) is not merely a significant plot-object—as for example in those adaptations where it is stolen—but for one reason or another an enigmatic one, as Leroux intended it to be:[4] not so much a set of instructions for musical performance, however innovative, but a bona fide vessel of musical aura. In doing so, I will explore the rhetoric of representing elite musical-theatrical performance in the context of the various kinds of transfer that the worldwide phenomenon of "Phantom" adaptations comprises: between cultures, between musical-theatrical genres and between "high" and "low" styles within those cultures and those genres. Naturally, while for Leroux finding the Phantom's skeleton is a metaphor for being able, finally, to articulate the enigma of operatic wonder, for successive film directors other, distinctively cinematic metaphors are necessary. But so is a careful reconsideration of what constitutes "source music," which in industry terminology simply denotes any music that plausibly emanates from a means of production or reproduction visible in the frame, but which in these examples is very much more complicated.[5]

An initial example, dealing with historical rather than fictional greatness, will help, I hope, to clarify some of the issues raised by *Don Juan Triumphant* and its analogues. In a sustained cinematic reflection on the nature of musical genius that has assumed something like canonic status, Miloš Forman's *Amadeus*, a key scene shows Salieri reading through what he is assured are first (and only) drafts of Mozart's compositions.[6] As in the rest of the film, Salieri's role is that of the celebrated but ultimately mediocre composer whose own works will not last, but who is a sufficiently skilled and imaginative musician to be able to recognize the

[4] The Phantom's score is, or is believed to be, stolen in the adaptations directed by Arthur Lubin (1943, Universal, USA) and Terence Fisher (1962, Hammer/Universal, UK/USA); see the essay by Annette Davison in the present special issue.
[5] See among others David Neumeyer, "Diegetic/Nondiegetic: A Theoretical Model," *Music and the Moving Image* 2/1 (2009), 26-39. Other terms, more or less confined to academic analysis, include *syuzhet* (following its use in opposition to *fabula* by the Russian Formalists) and "diegetic" music.
[6] *Amadeus* (1984, AMLF/Saul Zaentz, USA/France/Czechoslovakia), starred Tom Hulce and F. Murray Abraham. Although widely praised and highly successful, the film did attract criticism from some musicologists for its distortion of facts about Mozart's life and (in some cases) of his music; see Jeongwon Joe, "Reconsidering *Amadeus*: Mozart as Film Music," in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 57–73.

enduring perfection of those of his rival.[7] The point being made at this juncture is that Mozart's scores are so pristine that, rather than marking the hard labor of human creation, it is as if they are evidence of his having simply been taking dictation; they record the "voice of God," as Salieri puts it. As a parable of inspiration and its disjunction from mere technical facility the meaning of the scene is very clear, but what also comes across is the importance of the score not just as a physical stand-in for the musical work but also as a way of gesturing toward its source in more than one sense. Salieri's leafing through the portfolio, from piece to famous piece, is a kind of channel-surfing through the K numbers for the listener, each different shot of another folio of manuscript pressing "play" on a different track from the Orchestra of St Martin in the Fields back catalogue for the listener, as well as instantiating a kind of reading-as-discernment on the part of the viewer.[8] For both listener and viewer, the source of great music must reside in a physical object, here an eclectic portfolio of manuscripts dating from between 1774 and 1782, to occupy fully its filmic space. But from its taking up that space there emerges a compelling problematization of the relationship between significant music that is both diegetic and nondiegetic, soundtrack and score, immanent and symbolic—of what it really means to say that the music is presented to the listener-viewer, to say that it is *there*.

Salieri's ability to divine from the notation a sonic realization unsullied by anything as worldly as actual diegetic performance ultimately evokes the philosophical question of the status of the (autograph) score vis a vis the work—in particular in the fading-out of the sound when he turns to the next folio, which seems to imply that the work continues to "play," in some ideal state elsewhere, even though he has, as it were, tuned out.[9] In a closely related way, it also evokes

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[7] Joe, "Reconsidering *Amadeus*," 68.

[8] All the music in the film was played by this orchestra, conducted by its founder, Neville Marriner. The scene in question features the Concerto for Flute and Harp K299, the Symphony (no. 29) in A K201, the Concerto for Two Pianos K365, the Sinfonia Concertante K364, and the Mass in C Minor K427.

[9] In many accounts the standard initial reference is to Roman Ingarden (trans. Adam Czerniawski, ed. Jean G. Harrell), *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). In this case there is also a link with an idea circulating in film music studies—and perhaps most clearly expressed in Jeff Smith, "Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music," *Music and the Moving Image* 2/1 (2009), 1–25: 3—that "diegetic" music includes pieces that demonstrably exist within the *fabula* of the film, whether or not they are heard or even alluded to. See also Smith's discussion of "metadiegetic" music (23), based on Claudia Gorbman's definition of the term in her *Unheard Melodies: Narrative*

all sorts of historical reception baggage to do with the canonization of Mozart in the intervening period.[10] But its interest in the present context derives more from its being a special case of musico-cinematic "thereness" that has implications for popular cultural (and not only philosophical) constructions of musical origination: just as we sometimes see what Salieri sees in this scene, we sometimes hear what he "hears." ("Sometimes" because although the fading in and out is timed to coincide with his changing field of vision, there is a slight mismatch when the page that comes into focus shows music a few measures behind what is being played on the soundtrack at that moment.)[11] As such, it also raises the possibility that what we hear is not called into being directly by the score, nor by the underscore (for example as some kind of editorial commentary on the incredible heterogeneity of Mozart's compositional output before he was even twenty-seven) but rather both emanates from, and is enclosed within, Salieri himself.[12] The music is "there," but, for reasons of sensitivity and access that go beyond the obvious barrier of literacy, the source is not available to everyone in the room (in this case not to Constanze Mozart). The *brio* of its sonic realization is, in the context of the film narrative, partly attributable to Salieri's enthusiasm for it. And, finally, the plenitude of the way we all hear it no doubt has something to do with his quasi-directorial status as narrator of the story. But whatever Salieri's incidental agency, the scene is unavoidably centered on the aura of the scores in manuscript. This is what makes it an especially useful context for approaching the mysteries of *Don Juan Triumphant.*

The unfinished manuscript

My first fictional example encapsulates a number of the issues raised by this idea of "thereness" which derive not only from the film's initial conception and

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Film Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[10] This is, to put it rather reductively to say the least, the enterprise of Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[11] The Concerto for Two Pianos, third movement: we see measures 236–46 but hear 252–59. In a sense this feature of the scene engages interestingly with what in modern film studies is often called "fidelity," the measure of a sound's apparent location and quality with respect to its plausible point of origin; see David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993) and as discussed in Smith, "Bridging the Gap," 6 onward.

[12] This notion is similar to those discussed by Ben Winters in "The Non-diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music & Letters* 91/2 (2010), 224–44.

execution, but also—in fact principally—from its subsequent production and dissemination history. It is among the most famous scenes the *Phantom* films have to offer, indeed one of the most famous in the history of cinema: the iconic unmasking of Lon Chaney in the 1925 silent adaptation.[13] More important for the present purposes than the celebrated make-up is a revelation in which the camera seems just as interested: moments before we see the Phantom's hideous face, which legend records as having caused numerous spectators at early screenings to swoon, we see the music on the stand—which legend seems not to have noticed at all. But given the other apparently superhuman abilities of the Phantom (acrobat, ventriloquist, engineer, etc.) and the striking description of his music in the novel (its effect on the listener is rendered in the film by a lengthy shot of Christine in the next room, attention rapt, bosom heaving), the opening measures would seem to be of tantalizing interest to the historian of opera (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: the manuscript on the organ music stand in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), 42'20."

[13] *The Phantom of the Opera*, directed by Rupert Julian, Universal Pictures, USA. It also starred Mary Philbin and Norman Kerry.

As the close camerawork makes clear, these are obviously not mere random notes such as to look convincing to non-musically-literate viewers: the full-frame view remains constant for five full seconds, inviting careful scrutiny. In fact, the static shot acts just like another intertitle, both by virtue of its articulating function and through its obvious demand to be read; it is as if these first two systems of the manuscript are intended to be capable of communicating something significant to the viewer. For those able to read it (and notwithstanding a few chords that are not very well vertically aligned and a few accidentals not very accurately applied), what it communicates is the beginning of a more or less intelligible piece of music. But where we fully expect from this ultra-operatic villain—who lives for, through and in a sense *inside* opera—a grandiose work for the lyric stage, what we actually see is a few measures of melody with keyboard accompaniment but no words. More puzzling still, the melody is obviously not even intended for voice but, given the transposing key signature and the tessitura, plausibly for B-flat clarinet or trumpet.[14] In fact, as the object of the extravagant descriptions by both Christine and the Phantom in the novel, the piece is hardly intelligible at all: its triadic harmony (variously enriched by sixths, sevenths and elevenths, and by suspensions and chromatic accented passing-notes that produce some clashes) and its extreme rhythmic simplicity hardly represent a bold stride forward in musical composition, whether by the standards of c. 1881, when the novel is set, or 1909–10, when it was published—still less 1925, when the film came out.

It is true that Leroux never unambiguously identifies *Don Juan Triumphant* as an opera, even if, notwithstanding the iconographically essential organ, the general context suggests strongly that it must be. Almost all screen adaptations, certainly, assume at least that it is a work for the dramatic stage, the main exceptions being Arthur Lubin's *Phantom of the Opera* (1943) and Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974).[15] But all references in the novel are to the

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[14] Of the instruments used at the Opéra in the nineteenth century, the bass clarinet, cornet, tenor saxophone and saxhorn are also possible—but perhaps less likely—candidates.

[15] In *Phantom of the Opera* directed by Arthur Lubin (1943, Universal, USA, starring Claude Rains, Susanna Foster, Nelson Eddy and Edgar Barrier), the composition is a piano concerto, but based on a song; see below and note 34. The *Faust* "cantata" in *Phantom of the Paradise* (starring William Finley, Jessica Harper and Paul Williams, who also wrote the songs) should be understood in the context of generic flux exemplified by the "pop cantata" *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor*

Phantom playing it on the organ, whether in the course of completing it or as self-expression (of his feelings at particularly unhappy moments, or of his troubled existence in general), rather than to any singing voice. And when the Phantom himself sings (in a duet, supposedly from *Otello*, with Christine),[16] it is with contempt, although whether his disdain is for the style, the genre as a whole or its too-cozy domestication within the institution is left artfully unclear.[17] In other words, he may be the Phantom of the Opera, but he is not necessarily a phantom of *opera*. This scene, which comes directly after Christine's discovery that her "Angel of Music" is actually a flesh-and-blood voice-coach (with fleshly as well as vocal designs on her), and directly before she unmasks him, is thus part of a sequence of disorientating revelations that have to do with where music comes from—more on this below—but also, in the case of *Don Juan Triumphant*, where it might be going.

One way of interpreting the 1925 reading of this uncertainty about the kind of work *Don Juan Triumphant* is might be to see it as the suggestion that the work is radical not so much in its language but in its genre: not merely a new kind of dramatic music that, in keeping with opera's tradition of periodic reform, rejects the melodramatic staginess of nineteenth-century works and their exaggerated voices, but one that rejects singing and the stage full stop. After the controversial performances of concert pieces organized by Schoenberg and others in major European capitals in the 1910s and early 1920s but long before *Erwartung*, *Die glückliche Hand* (both first performed in 1924) and especially *Wozzeck* (later in 1925) reached the United States, it might indeed have been possible for Hollywood at this time to see radical musical Modernism as moving away from the opera house. But such aesthetic commentary seems unlikely to have been at the forefront of the minds of the director or designer, much less ordinary cinema-goers; in any case only measures 4 and 5 of the extract shown exhibit anything in

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Dreamcoat by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber (1965), and the "rock operas" *Tommy* by The Who (1969) and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, also by Rice and Lloyd Webber (1970).

[16] *The Essential Phantom of the Opera*, 179 (Chapter 13). There is no love duet in Rossini's *Otello*, but Verdi's was first performed (at La Scala) only in 1887, and not at the Opéra until 1894, i.e. more than a decade after the period in which the novel is set; see Hogle, *The Undergrounds of 'The Phantom of the Opera'*, 20, and Newark, *Opera in the Novel*, 154.

[17] *The Essential Phantom of the Opera*, 178–9 (Chapter 13): in Christine's words, he invites her to sing opera "as if he were spewing insults at me."

the way of challenging chromaticism. Neither does this explanation get across what the Phantom says about the piece in the two intertitles that follow: "Since first I saw your face, this music has been singing to me of you and of—love triumphant!" and "Yet listen—there sounds an ominous undercurrent of warning!" The fixed attention lavished on the score in this scene, even within the film's contemporary grammar of static expressions and tableaux, is therefore deeply ambiguous, creating an audiovisual complex in which the music is overdetermined but simultaneously undermined.

The ambiguity only increases when we try to work out what cinema-goers actually heard at this point. The transition from silent to talkies was not a smooth or uniform one, with the different technologies (and different versions of films) surviving side-by-side in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in the case of major projects compounding the already confusing situation of multiple edits made in response to reactions at various advance screenings. Nowhere did this prove more complicated than in the history of *The Phantom of the Opera*. It seems that at least three scores were prepared: one by Joseph Carl Breil for the Los Angeles previews in January 1925, now lost; one composed by Gustav Hinrichs and revised by Max Winkler for the New York premiere of the edited-down version of the film in September of that year;[18] and one put together hurriedly by Eugene Conte when it transpired that Hinrichs' would not be ready in time. A further score, for the 1929 re-issue with sound, was commissioned from Sam Perry. As far as can be determined, all of these included liberal reference to the extracts from Gounod's *Faust* referred to in the novel, in the film's intertitles, and in particular in the famous chandelier sequence, when what is being performed on stage is manifestly the "Jewel Song" from Act 3.[19]

But of course most cinema-goers would not have heard these original, at least partly through-composed scores. In the vast majority of cinemas there would have been, rather, a keyboard accompaniment based on a series of musical cues: those same *Faust* extracts, certainly, but also other pieces of somewhat less

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[18] A copy of this score is held in the archive of the American Theatre Organ Society; see Kendra Preston Leonard, "From 'Angel of Music' to 'that Monster': Music for the Human Uncanny in *Phantom of the Opera* (1925/1929)", *Studies in Gothic Fiction* 3/1 (2014), 13–23, studiesingothicfiction.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/8/8/22885250/volume_3_issue_1.pdf

[19] *The Phantom of the Opera*, 1925, 20'55" onward. Preston Leonard, "From 'Angel of Music' to 'that Monster'", 18.

diabolical pedigree. In particular, it seems that in this key scene the music was far from the "long, terrible, and magnificent sob" described by Leroux. What most often sounded here is prescribed in the Universal Pictures cue-sheet preserved in George Eastman House (Fig. 2, no. 30 for "organ solo").

Lon Chaney in "Phantom of the Opera" 1925

CUE SHEET

The timing is based on a speed of 14 minutes per reel (1,000 ft.).

PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME: "SECOND MOVEMENT OF PRELUDE TO A MYSTERY DRAMA," by Baron.

PHANTOM LOVE THEME: "TRIO OF PASTEL MENUET," by Paradis.

CHRISTINE LOVE THEME: "BECAUSE YOU SAY GOOD-BYE" (Dramatic Love Song), by Levy.

To Be Played Until T (Title) or S (Scene)	Length of Scene	No.	Title and Tempo of Musical Composition
At Screening	2 min.	1	PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME
T Gaston Leroux, the famous	50 sec.	2	Continue to action
T But who thinks of cellars	2 min. 25 sec.	3	Birds and Butterflies........by Levy
S Orchestra conductor in view	2 min. 20 sec.	4	Faust Waltz............by Gounod
T Christine, my love, when	40 sec.	5	CHRISTINE LOVE THEME
T At the height of the most	2 min.	6	PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME
T In the cellars of	1 min. 30 sec.	7	Gruesome Mysterioso.......by Borch
T Carlotta, favorite Prima Donna	4 min. 40 sec.	8	Dramatic Recitative No. 1....by Levy
T Come, I'll show you where I saw him	40 sec.	9	Continue FF.
T Meanwhile in Christine's dressing room	2 min. 20 sec.	10	Elegie ....by Baron
T I shall sing for you	1 min. 25 sec.	11	Majestic Mysterioso..........Kilenyi
T The following day in a	3 min. 30 sec.	12	CHRISTINE LOVE THEME
T Mme. Carlotta was strangely ill on	2 min 40 sec.	13	Spinning Song (Faust)....by Gounod
T Who occupies Box 5	50 sec.	14	PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME
T Moved as by celestial	1 min.	15	Opening of "Faust Selection," Gounod (Hawkes Edition only.)
S Christine fainting back-stage	2 min. 35 sec.	16	Dramatic Suspense ......by Winkler
S Bearded man leaving Christine's room	2 min. 25 sec.	17	PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME
T Another discordant note	2 min. 25 sec.	18	Sinister Theme ....by Vely
T At the office of M. Faure	1 min. 30 sec.	19	Dramatic Tension ....by Levy
T The following evening	3 min.	20	Faust Jewel Song........by Gounod
S Flickering of lights	1 min. 15 sec.	21	Tacet, ad. lib. (Tympani rolls only until.)
S Chandelier crashing down		22	Effect of tremendous crash
S People rushing out of Opera House	1 min. 45 sec.	23	Furioso ....by Shepherd
S Christine enters her dressing room. NOTE: Begin pp then to action.	4 min.	24	Tragic Theme ....by Vely
T The Phantom's last line. NOTE: Produce effects of peculiar sounding gong, three times.	3 min.	25	Dramatic Reproach ....by Berge
T Because I love you	2 min.	26	Notte Mysteriosa..............Becce
T You, you are the Phantom	2 min.	27	PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME
S Close-up of Christine sleeping in bed. NOTE: Begin pp then to action.	1 min. 25 sec.	28	Dramatic Agitato ....by Hough
T The night passed	2 min.	29	CHRISTINE LOVE THEME
S Phantom at organ	1 min. 10 sec.	30	PHANTOM LOVE THEME (Organ solo, "Trio from Pastel Menuet," by Paradis.)
T Since first I saw your face	40 sec.	31	Tacet
T Yet listen, there sounds	35 sec.	32	Repeat former organ solo one octave lower. Same as Cue No. 29.
S Christine tears off mask. NOTE: Begin FF.	2 min.	33	Tympani Roll FF followed by "PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME."
T I shall prove to you. NOTE: To be played with orchestra.	1 min. 45 sec.	34	PHANTOM LOVE THEME (Trio, "Pastel Menuet," by Paradis.)
T In the midst of his	35 sec.	35	CHRISTINE LOVE THEME
T One night each year	2 min. 35 sec.	36	First Concert Waltz.......by Durand
T Beneath your dancing feet	1 min. 15 sec.	37	PHANTOM MYSTERY THEME
T High above Paris. NOTE: Read notes heading cue sheet.	1 min. 30 sec.	38	CHRISTINE LOVE THEME
T He is a Monster	1 min. 10 sec.	39	Continue FF.
T She has betrayed me	1 min. 30 sec.	40	Continue to action
S Flash back to masque ball	1 min. 10 sec.	41	Repeat "First Concert Waltz," ....by Durand

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Figure 2: cue-sheet for *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925); the scene in question is "Phantom at organ," cue no. 30. Image courtesy of George Eastman Museum.

Indeed, it seems that none of the posited musical accompaniments to this scene attempted a realization of, or even any reference to, the score in front of the viewer. Some, like this cue-sheet, instead took the object of representation to be the Phantom's feelings for Christine, inserting at this point a "Phantom Love Theme" calculated to hint at a possible redemption for the title character.[20] This must necessarily be different, at least in origin, from *Don Juan Triumphant*, which the original novel makes clear predates those feelings—as both the title and the Phantom's relationship with it suggest, it may even stand in opposition to them.[21] In any case, and whatever the merits of the Trio from "Pastel Menuet" by H. Paradis (see Fig. 3), few would claim that it is "music that consumes all those who come near it."

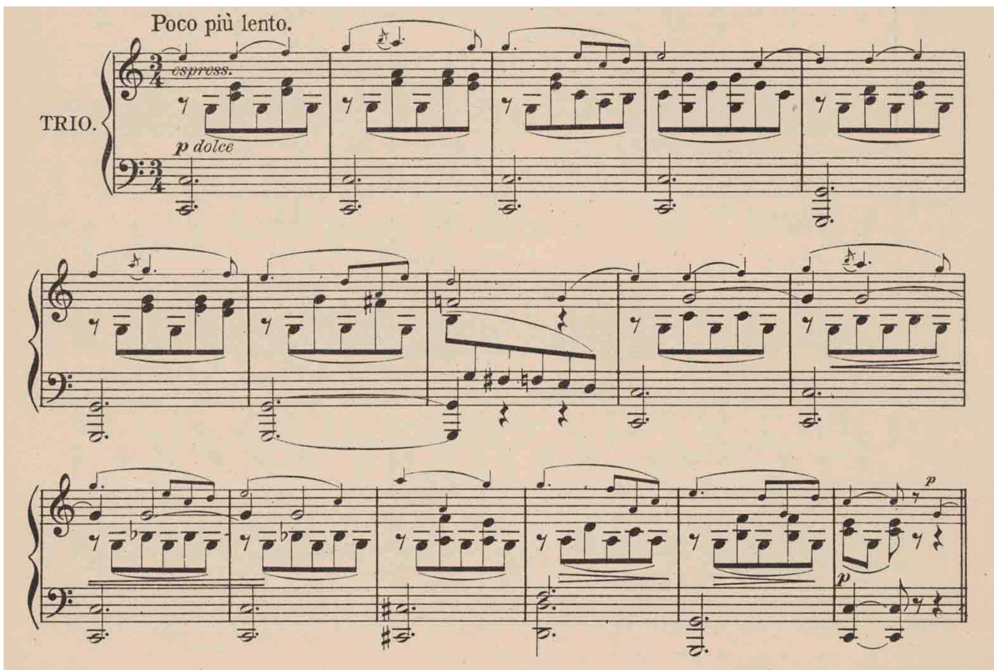

Figure 3: Trio from "Pastel Menuet" by Paradis, performance available via streaming at www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/4708/ (the Trio begins at 1'30").

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[20] For example that of Hinrichs and Winkler: see Preston Leonard, "From 'Angel of Music' to 'that Monster,'" 19. The same solution is adopted by Carl Davis in his through-composed score, these days probably the most widely known (1998).
[21] Following the unmasking, which represents a rupture between the Phantom and Christine, it is to *Don Juan Triumphant* that he returns.

This piece of stock music appears to be remarkable only for being so completely at odds with any genre or style that could be imagined from this and the other descriptions in Leroux, or for that matter from the intertitles of the film. Furthermore, judging by those descriptions, not only is it not the music we expect *Don Juan Triumphant* to be, it is surely not even a music we can accept as capable of representing the Phantom's feelings, which at this point in the plot are those of a man of proven violence apparently in the grip of the strongest emotions of his life.

What are we to do with this further ambiguity? If I have labored the point of the disconnection between what spectators see and audiences hear in this scene—even in various fixed soundtracks available on digital media now, but especially those merely suggested accompaniments during the film's first theatrical release—it is only to draw attention to what it may tell us about the special relationship between music and moving image in this scene, one perhaps not unique to Phantom films but, as we will see, one they certainly develop in unique depth. Whether or not the director, or the producing studio Universal Pictures more generally, originally had plans to meet head-on the challenge to representation laid down in Leroux, it is clear that the genesis, production process, initial reception and distribution of *The Phantom of the Opera* conspired to complicate the issue. For while the *source* of the music on screen initially seems unproblematic—the music is legible on the stand, the composer is playing, and the relevant intertitle explicitly connects the one with the other—its reception by audiences must surely have been compromised by a whole series of disorientating disjunctions that, given the centrality of music in the film, on the face of it would appear to threaten its fundamental referential structure. That is, the really radical thing about *Don Juan Triumphant* in 1925 is how thoroughly it problematizes its location: it is apparently not what Leroux imagined, emphatically not in the audience's ears, and not even on the page of musical manuscript that claims to notate it. The effect of the absence is such that an object invested with such a charge of meaning in the novel is positively divested of it in the adaptation.

This problematization goes far beyond the familiar special status of silent film musical accompaniment, which, in the way described above, is almost always to some extent potential. On the one hand, it encourages reflection on the

manipulation of sound for effect in the context of a plot in which that manipulation is a constant theme: the Phantom begins as, and never completely sheds the qualities of, a supernatural entity, with his ventriloquism at the very center of his otherness. He is repeatedly shown as being capable of giving sounds a misleading location, to mischievous and even murderous ends.[22] Moreover, the Phantom's omniscience throughout the novel, the pervasive sense that the Opéra is his universe, evokes an agency that in the context of film studies is most easily thought of as directorial, even when, as in 1925, directorial control of sound is either difficult to establish or (depending on which manifestation of the film is intended) epistemologically untenable. All this notwithstanding, the deliberate suggestion, using notation, that the music in this scene *ought* to be fixable seems if anything a kind of joke at the expense of the musically literate viewer.[23] On the other hand, the scene raises the intriguing question that if the "something significant" the music communicates is on a different level from what in film theory is commonly called the diegesis,[24] then the music on the stand has the status of "text on" rather than "text of" *Don Juan Triumphant*, and that it is somehow music *about* music. It thus functions as a kind of placeholder, connotative rather than denotative, and, in the context of the "layers" often evoked in debates about the different kinds of relationship between music and moving image, effectively transports what I am calling the "thereness" of the music to a special meta-layer. It forces us to reflect on the role of music that clearly exists inside the head of one of the characters, and toward which he gestures in various ways (by talking about it, by playing it), music that the other character listens for and can apparently hear, but that is nevertheless so elusively secret that it is denied to cinema-goers, who are instead fobbed off with various stand-ins, approximations or musical attempts to change the subject. It asks us what we should do with music we cannot hear but know is nonetheless present.

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[22] For example when he places the croak of a toad in Carlotta's mouth: *The Essential Phantom of the Opera*, 118.

[23] See Giorgio Biancorosso, "The Harpist in the Closet: Film Music as Epistemological Joke," *Music and the Moving Image* 2/3 (2009), 11–33.

[24] But see recent discussions by, among others, Robynn Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard D. Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 184-202; Neumeyer, "Diegetic/Nondiegetic"; and Winters, "The Non-diegetic Fallacy."

No doubt this elusiveness far exceeds Leroux's metaphor of the found skeleton and lost music, but further, even more elaborate complications were to come in the adaptations that followed.

The revised manuscript

Perhaps the identity of the Phantom's apparently almost supernatural music was always likely to remain mysterious in a silent film; perhaps that is part of the reason for that film's still-classic status. But in the first adaptation with sound, conceived as a response to Julian's *The Phantom of the Opera* following the latter's world-wide success,[25] the music that emanates from, and surrounds, the eponymous protagonist is scarcely less mysterious. *Yeban gesheng* (*Song at Midnight*, 1937, Xinhua Yingye Gongsi or New China Film Company) was made in Shanghai, cradle of the film industry in China and by some way its most cosmopolitan city, just before the Japanese occupation.[26] It thus emerged into a situation of flux: Hollywood commanded 90% of the film market nationally (and would continue to do so until after the Second World War), but in Shanghai energetic local production and a rich environment of cultural transfer combined to foster the "first Golden Age" of Chinese cinema. *Yeban gesheng* was the first directorial success of Ma-Xu Weibang, former designer, art director and then actor. It is commonly thought of as the first Chinese horror film (*kongbu pian*) in general; in particular, its success generated a second part, *Yeban gesheng xuji* (*Song at Midnight, the Sequel*, 1941), much less well received. Whatever the wider significance of *Yeban gesheng*, it certainly inspired a long tradition of Phantom adaptations in various parts of China, almost all with the same name and basic plot.[27]

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[25] Yiman Wang, "The Phantom Strikes Back: Triangulating Hollywood, Shanghai and Hong Kong," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 21/4 (2004), 317-326.

[26] David Robinson suggests that the director, Ma-Xu Weibang, did not see the 1925 adaptation until after making his own: "Return of the Phantom," *Film Quarterly* 53/2 (1999), 43-46. Julian's film was, however, screened in Shanghai as early as January 1926, and the 1929 re-release with sound was also shown there; see records in the National Newspaper Index (*Quanguo Baokan Suoyin*: my thanks to Yang Hon-Lun for her help with this resource). It seems inconceivable that he did not see and learn from it.

[27] It is important to note that although the Chinese title stays the same in all the successive adaptations, the accepted English translation sometimes varies: *Song at Midnight* in 1937, 1985 and 2005, but *The Mid-Nightmare* in 1962–3 and *Phantom Lover* in 1995. Yiman Wang underlines this at the beginning of Chapter 4, "Mr Phantom Goes to the East", 113–141, in her *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Hollywood* (Honolulu: University

The film tells the story of the actor-singer-composer Song Danping, who lives in a condemned theater that has been derelict for some time. He is horribly disfigured following an acid attack ten years ago by a petty official, jealous of his relationship with Li Xiaoxia, daughter of the local feudal lord. Rather than let her see his horrific wounds, Danping allowed her to think that he had died, the shock of which drove her mad: her only solace since then has been the sound of his voice singing the song of the title (i.e. a song at midnight that is actually called "Song at Midnight"), which he does, now as the Phantom, whenever the moon is full. As in Leroux and in the majority of other adaptations of the novel, the Phantom's initial and most important role is to act as voice-coach to the ostensible romantic lead, but rather than a soprano ingénue at a major international house, this is a young male actor-singer in an itinerant troupe that is only too glad to occupy the run-down provincial theater at a reduced rate. The coaching itself, which in Leroux we are left to imagine because it has already been going on for a while before the main narrative of the novel opens, forms a significant early scene in this film, with the disembodied voice of the Phantom correcting the mistakes of the inexperienced Sun Xiao'ou.

The Phantom, however, seems never to have undergone any such period of training himself. As in Leroux, where we are told that Erik came to the Opéra initially as a stonemason employed in its construction rather than for the music, Danping chose theatrical life not as the natural consequence of vocation and education but rather as a refuge from dangerous political activism. Already as a teenager, he tells Xiao'ou, he was leading large companies of other youths in revolutionary action, as a result of which he had to change his name (he was originally called Jin Zijian). That was thirteen years ago. After three years in hiding, his notoriety had lessened sufficiently for him to be able to take up a new identity as an actor. Almost immediately, it would seem, he enjoyed great success. In a not wholly dissimilar way, the Erik of the novel has also had to retire from political activity (he had been in the service of successive Asian despots, where his

of Hawaiʻi Press, 2013). For her, this succession of remakes not only constitutes "an important genealogy of Chinese horror film" in its own right (113–14), but also the expression of a subaltern subject-position mirrored in the teacher-pupil relationship at the heart of the plot. See also Wang, "The Phantom Strikes Back," 319.

role was to construct secret passages and torture chambers) and flee for his life.[28] In neither case is there mention of any previous knowledge of, or affinity for, singing, although Erik's experience of machinery for illusion was at least applicable to the theatrical arts (in the novel he is referred to as "l'amateur des trappes," the trap-door enthusiast). Both are clearly meant to be Renaissance men with a range of talents, artists in the wider sense. Both have committed acts that have been considered criminal (even if the respective narratives suggest that Erik is mostly a baddy and Danping mostly a goody). And both, as we shall see, are in fundamental conflict with the audience of the theater, even if their artistic choices (in Erik's case, his talent-spotting of Christine; in Danping's, his own apparently successful performances) temporarily find favor with it.

The musical context for representing this new Phantom's artistry is extremely eclectic: although *Yeban gesheng* is the first Phantom film with an integral soundtrack, it relies for most of its length on the same principle of stock extracts that governed earlier films. Much of the music heard comes from repertory pieces pressed into service as melodramatic commentary on the emotional or moral complexion of particular scenes. What is striking is that this commentary music is all Western, including the "Air" from J. S. Bach's orchestral Suite in D (c. 1731, to express the Phantom's feelings when he sees his protégé with the latter's lover), Musorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain* (1866-7, used as a kind of *William Tell*/*Lone Ranger* "hurry" music and accordingly heard in a recording that seems to be accelerated, with passages overlapping), Debussy's *La Fille aux cheveux de lin* (1910, rescored for violin and piano, to denote the past tenderness of Danping and his love Xiaoxia), and, for when one of the female characters is undressing behind a screen, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924, obviously racy by the local standards of the time).[29] No doubt this reflects Shanghai's culture of orchestral music, initially unique in China, which had its roots in semicolonial or immigrant music-making in the last quarter of the nineteenth century but which was by that time firmly established. Western and Chinese musical institutions flourished side by side there; the Shanghai

[28] In the 1925 film, by contrast, a rather gnomic police file identifies him as "ERIK. Born during the Boulevard Massacre. Self educated musician and master of Black Art. Exiled to Devil's Island for criminal insane. ESCAPED. NOW AT LARGE."
[29] Robinson, "Return of the Phantom,"45.

Conservatory had been founded in 1927. But it also reflects something about musical inheritance—the communication of performing materials in some durable form or other—that will prove key to the Phantom on film tradition. As we shall see, while the semicolonial musical legacy represented by the incorporation of Bach, Debussy and the others is articulated in the grammar of the analogous cinematic legacy (i.e. using ready-made effects from a library whose contents everyone knows), the presentation of the more indigenous music involves passing on text in a somewhat different way.

This alternative grammar is established early on, in the title song, which is a hybrid: a more traditionally Chinese vocal idiom; a musical style that draws on both popular song and traditional opera; and an accompaniment, performed on Western instruments, that features some anomalous interludes apparently intended to denote the spookiness of the ghostly troubadour's performance.

Kong ting feizhe liuying, Gao tai zouzhe lisheng, Ren er banzhe gu deng, Bang'er qiaozhe san geng.	In an empty courtyard, fireflies flow by. In high pedestals, there walk foxes A man walks with a solitary light, the gong is struck three times.
Feng qiqi, yu linlin, huan luan luo, ye piaoling, zai zhe manmande heiyeli, shui tong wo dengdaizhe tianming? Shui tong wo dengdaizhe tianming?	Outside, the wind howls and rain pours. Flowers and leaves fall into the black, endless midnight. Who will wait for the dawn with me? Who will wait for the dawn with me?
Wo xinger shi gui side zhengning, xiner shi tie side jianzhen. Wo zhiyao yi xi shang cun, shi he na fengjiande mowang kangzheng.	My face is hideous as a ghost, My heart is hard as iron. But I am alive and I will fight the devil of feudalism.
A! Guniang, zhiyou nide yan neng kan po wode pingsheng,	Ah, miss, only you can see my life.
Zhiyou nide xin neng lijie wode zhongqing.	Only you can know my innermost feelings.

Ni shi tianshangde yue,	You are the moon in the sky.
wo shi na yuebiande han xing.	I am the cold star near that moon.
Ni shi shanshangde shu,	You are the tree atop the hill.
wo shi na shushangde ku teng.	I am the rattan on that tree.
Ni shi chizhongde shui,	You are the water in the pond.
wo shi na shuishangde fuping.	I am the duckweed in the water.
Bu! Guniang, wo yuanyi yong zuo fenmulide ren,	No, miss. I would be the dead in the grave.
maidiao shishangde fuming,	To give up all the riches and fame of this world.
Wo yuanyi xue na xingyude shi cheng,	I would like to learn how the historian
jin xiechu renjiande buping.	writes the gravestones of humanity.
O! Guniang'a! Tian hunhun, di mingming.	Oh, miss. The day is murky, the ground is cold. / What can I do to show my rage?
Yong shenme lai biao wode fennu?	
Weiyou na jiangtaode benteng.	Only the crashing of the waves.
Yong shenme lai wei nide jimo？	What can I do to vanquish your loneliness?
Weiyou zhe yeban gesheng,	Only this song at midnight.
weiyou zhe yeban gesheng.	Only this song at midnight.

Its composer, Xian Xinghai, had studied at the Paris Conservatoire with D'Indy and Dukas before taking charge of the music department at Xinhua. The author of the words was Tian Han, who had also written the song "Yiyongjun Jinxingqu" ("March of the Volunteers") a couple of years earlier, which would go on to be chosen as the national anthem of the People's Republic of China; from his interventions in the script more generally derives much of its political resonance.[30] Aside from reflecting the turbulent political situation, then, the mixture of transplantation and integration in the soundtrack of *Yeban gesheng* thus communicates an equally turbulent parallel musical situation, in which different kinds of modernity jostle for space, updated elements from established Chinese styles vying with new (or newly imported) Western musics.[31] In the case of the title song, that modernity extends to the relationship between the music and the

[30] "Yiyongjun Jinxingqu", with music by Nie Er, first appeared in the film *Fengyun ernü* (*Children of Troubled Times*/*Children of the Storm*, 1935, Diantong Film Company, directed by Xu Xingzhi). See also Wang, *Remaking Chinese cinema*, 121.

[31] This reflection was to become more complex; Wang argues that "the difficulty of representing the disfigured phantom within the diegesis serves as an analogy for the difficult encounter with the historical trauma (and its impact on the present)": Wang, *Remaking Chinese Cinema*, 113.

moving image: it is the former that now seems to have the power to conjure up stock responses from the latter. The process of establishing that new relationship begins organically enough, with poetic references that coincide with the visual and aural setting (the nightwatchman striking the midnight hour at 8’38”, lines 3–4 of the text, and the rain falling and wind blowing; see Figs. 3 and 4).[32]

Figure 3: the nightwatchman with his light, striking the hour (8’38”, lines 3–4 of the song text) in *Yeban gesheng* (1937).

Figure 4: rain falling and wind blowing (9’04”, line 5) in *Yeban gesheng* (1937).

[32] In pre-modern China, three strokes of the gong (*san geng*, three times) referred to the period from eleven o’clock in the evening to one o’clock in the morning. My thanks to Qian Lijuan for her help with this text.

But it then goes on to produce accompanying images which, though apostrophized in the words of the song and superficially consonant with the surrounding visual vocabulary of spooky night-time exterior shots, are progressively more detached from the diegetic context (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5: the “moon in the sky” (11’15”, line 16 of the song text), the “tree atop the hill” (11’28”, line 18), the “water in the pond,” complete with duckweed (11’58”, line 20) and the “crashing of the waves” (13’54”, line 28) in *Yeban gesheng* (1937). In a device that recalls Julian’s 1925 adaptation (or perhaps rather the debt that both films owe to German expressionist cinema),[33] the Phantom’s shadow on a wall somewhere inside the theater provides a point of orientation for the singing, but this imagery—which, crucially, has no sound-effects—seems to derive directly from the song. In other words, the newly written music is able to exercise a precisely opposite function with respect to the film to that of the Western pieces, extorting stock responses from the moving image where Musorgsky and the other composers had themselves been called up, in entirely generic cues, to convey “tenderness” (Debussy), “sexiness” (Gershwin), and so on.

This shifting status is the background to the Phantom’s politically charged music theater. The first work the troupe performs, *Yellow River Love* (*Huanghe zhilian*), is set in the twelfth century and appears to be a straightforward Romeo-and-Juliet story of lovers separated by conflict.[34] The composer of this fictional

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[33] Wang, *Remaking Chinese Cinema*, 122. It would be fascinating if there were evidence suggesting that Ma-Xu had seen the first known screen adaptation of *Le Fantôme de l’Opéra*, a German film from 1916 called *Das Phantom der Oper* or *Das Gespenst im Opernhaus* (directed by Ernst Matray, now lost); alas, there is no reference in the Chinese National Newspaper Index suggesting it was ever screened in Shanghai.

[34] Xian’s most famous work was to be the similar-sounding *Yellow River Cantata* (*Huanghe dahechang*) composed a couple years after *Yeban gesheng*; see Ho-Lun Yang, “The Making of a National Musical Icon: Xian Xinghai and his *Yellow River Cantata*,” in *Music, Power, and Politics*, ed. Annie J. Randall (New York: Routledge, 2005), 87-112.

work is not identified, but the manager of the troupe says it has been chosen in an effort to appeal to local taste; the style of the male lead's big song, the one given to Xiao'ou to practice near the beginning of the film, is suitably plaintive. When that effort seems to have failed, box-office receipts are falling and it looks as if the troupe will have to move on, the Phantom advises mounting something more stirring and in various ways more challenging:

> Phantom: Ni yiwei wo zai zhe shi nian zhong, jiu jinjin weile nuren zai zhe'er kunao ma? Bu, jue bu. Wo cengjing zuoguole xuduo de gongzuo.
> Xiao'ou: Gongzuo?
> Phantom: Shi de, shi de. Wo xieguole xuduo, xuduo de juben. Zheng ziyou mou jiefang de juben wo yijing ti ni dai laile: "Rexue." Zhe shi wo shi nian qian de chenggong zuopin. Wo yijing ba ta gaibianguole, bingqie jia jinle xin de neirong. Pengyou, hao pengyou, song gei ni ba. Wo xiangxin, ni yiding hui chenggong de. Nimen… nimen jiangyao dedao guangda de guanzhong a![35]
>
> [Phantom: Do you think I've done nothing in the past ten years but be distressed about a woman? No, not at all. I've composed many works.
> Xiao'ou: Works?
> Phantom: Yes, I have written many, many works. Works about freedom and liberation. I have brought one for you: *Hot Blood*. This was my most successful opera ten years ago. I've already adapted it, and added new content. Friend, my good friend. I give this to you. I believe you'll be a great success. You… You will bring the house down!]

The word the Phantom uses as he announces with this flourish his physical gift to Xiao'ou, "juben," literally means "scripts," a term that judiciously keeps the question of genre—and the precise whereabouts of the musical component—in flux.[36]

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[35] *Yeban gesheng*, 1.26'44". The possible inspiration for the title of this fictional work—also translated in the literature as *Warm Blood*—is outlined in Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 336.
[36] Wang and Zhang both use the word "operetta," apparently to indicate that they assume these

The new piece turns out to have quite a bit more rhetorical and rhythmic urgency. Judging from the costumes and certain lines sung by Xiao'ou while in character, it seems to be set immediately before, during or (like *Tosca*) after the short-lived Roman Republic established by Napoleon in the name of the French revolutionary *Directoire*:

> Rendao de fenghuo ranbianle zhengge ouzhou. Women weizhe bo'ai pingdeng ziyou, yuan fu renhede daijia, shenzhi womende toulu. Womende rexue, dibo'erhe side bengliu. […] Hei'an kuaiyao shoule, guangming yijing shedao guluomade chengtou.
>
> [The fire of humanity has passed through the whole of Europe. We are willing to pay any price for universal love, equality and freedom. Our blood is pouring like the Tiber River. […] The dark will end soon, as light once dawned on Ancient Rome.]

But whatever its genre, musical effect or exact setting, the work's function in the narrative world of the film is quite straightforward. Like Danping himself, it is a provocation to a society still residually feudal and dominated by provincial warlords. The revision of *Rexue* is therefore the beginning of the Phantom's return to life in more ways than one, and it will eventually precipitate another return when the same petty official who took a liking to Xiaoxia, Tang Jun, develops a similarly abusive interest in Xiao'ou's partner and fellow performer, Lu Die. But in this hinge moment before the plot reaches its crisis, the Phantom passes the score of his opera to his protégé as if handing on the baton of class struggle (Fig. 6).

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works have spoken dialogue. Thanks to Timmy Chen Chih-ting for his help with this text.

Figure 6: the revised score of *Rexue* in *Yeban gesheng* (1937), 1.26’58”–27’19”

Xiao’ou’s awakened, hopeful gaze into the middle distance is artfully ambiguous: there is no doubt he finds the Phantom’s words—“Works about freedom and liberation”—suitably rousing, but he is also relieved that the company now has something else to try. In this adaptation of *Le Fantôme de l’Opéra*, new opera is about new hope, and it derives from ethical as much as artistic attitudes. The emphasis is not so much on the inspiration in the score but rather the inspiration in its reception.

What exactly local cinema audiences at the time were expected to understand about the context of the setting of *Rexue* is difficult to gauge, but its leftist sympathies are obvious. Even more difficult to judge is the precise ideological charge of Danping’s work for cinema-goers in different parts of China during the civil war and the nominal truce brought about by the Japanese invasion. Certainly, the film historians who have written about it all take for granted that the film as a whole is significant politically, as well as in terms of developments in cinematic technique, genre and aesthetics.[37] What is clear is that the actual composer Xian (who not only wrote the score but apparently compiled the other elements of the musical soundtrack too), went on to become a model artist for the subsequent Communist regime, whereas Ma-Xu was treated as a collaborator after the end of the Second World War because of his subsequent work in Japanese-occupied Shanghai (including *Yeban gesheng xuji*).[38] And the

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[37] In addition to the works already cited, see (among others) Yomi Braester, *Witness Against History: Literature, Film, and Public Discourse in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), and Giorgio Biancorosso’s essay in the present special issue.

[38] For a reading of the revolutionary message of the title song, see Braester, *Witness Against History*, 89.

high stakes involved in artistic political engagement are clear in the film, too. Jun attempts the rape of Die but is prevented by Xiao'ou, who accuses him of being an enemy of the people. Jun draws a gun on him but Die puts herself between them and is shot. The Phantom intervenes and finally has his revenge on Jun, killing him, but is then pursued out of the theater and across country not only by the militia, who in the meantime have found evidence of his revolutionary past, but also by the very audience who had responded with such enthusiasm to the anti-oligarchy message of his opera just minutes earlier. He tries to hide in an abandoned building by the river, but his persecutors catch up with him and set it alight. He throws himself into the waves and is seen no more. Such are the vicissitudes of operatic inspiration, but Xiao'ou, now fully converted to the cause and in possession of the performing materials of *Rexue*, is left to continue the struggle on stage and off.

Yeban gesheng has rightly been seen as occupying an important place in the histories of both Chinese cinema and Chinese cultural-political discourse; as the selection of commentary cited here shows, this extends to its music, too. But what seems especially distinctive about that music in the context of the (at the time nascent) transcultural phenomenon of screen adaptations of *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* is how the exhortatory quality of *Rexue* and the mysterious lyricism of the new hybrid music—the two facets of the Phantom's art that are together the local equivalent of *Don Juan Triumphant*—both participate in the most important aspect of the film's exposition of musical text: the integral subtitles it provides for its songs. As many commentators have pointed out, in China the worlds of theater, popular music and cinema have always overlapped more than elsewhere, so much so that cinema-going is considered incomplete without singing.[39] In the 1930s, films were even advertised as a means of learning the songs they contained.[40] To facilitate this, subtitles were added, as in the stills shown in Fig. 5. The practice, which Timmy Chen Chih-ting calls "proto-karaoke," originated in the silent era (when the music was supplied by a record played in the cinema) and is still

[39] As Brian Hu puts it, in his "The KTV Aesthetic: Popular Music Culture and Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," *Screen* 47/4 (2006), 407–24: 410, "in Chinese cinemas ranging back to 1930s Shanghai, there is an unwritten 'no song, no movie' rule."
[40] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 315–17.

common today.[41] With the transition to synchronized sound, given the politically unstable atmosphere of the 1930s, it inevitably became a means of transmitting new ideological content in a different form, perhaps more durable than the plot. In the case of *Yeban gesheng*, as the description here hopefully makes clear, that new content is also aesthetic, predicated on layers of cultural transfer: an originating text undergoing the beginnings of what might be called rhizomatic adaptation, with reference being made to both the novel and the 1925 silent film as well as local narrative tropes, in what is to begin with a musical environment of marked plurality and hybridity.[42]

Just as in 1925, however, the potential for audiovisual integration (and perhaps clarity of political message) was compromised. Even though the source of the musical work is made much of, even fetishized, with the script brandished evocatively and passed on symbolically, the source of the musical *sound* is made mysterious. It begins as acousmatic, with only a shadow to suggest its author, or disembodied entirely, supplying the vocal lines that poor Xiao'ou cannot get. Even when the Phantom appears, and his speaking voice is located solidly with his corporeal presence, his singing voice is only connected with him in flashback, when he summons up for Xiao'ou his past glories. And even that voice is not fully his: Jin Shan, playing Danping and the Phantom, was dubbed by Sheng Jialun.[43] In other words, the camera here is just as interested in the written record of the Phantom's new music as it was in 1925, and as Leroux was in the novel, but the music is as unmoored to the page as ever.

The digitized manuscript

The adaptations by Julian and Ma-Xu are widely considered to be milestones in the history of horror films in their respective countries of origin. Taken together,

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[41] Timmy Chen Chih-ting, "Sonic Secrets as Counter-Surveillance in Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*," in *Surveillance in Asian Cinema: Under Eastern Eyes*, ed. Karen Fang (Milton Keynes: Routledge, 2017), 156–175: 166–7.

[42] For the local context see in particular Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*.

[43] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 318; he notes (334) that the voice drifts off into the *acousmètre* again at the end of the film after its ostensible owner has apparently drowned. See also Wang, *Remaking Chinese Cinema*, 123, who goes on to point out (130) that the dubbing theme is picked up and developed in the 1995 remake, *Phantom Lover*, where the Phantom's protégé (in this version called Wei Qing) still cannot manage the high note by the time of the performance and it is supplied (firmly diegetically) by the Phantom himself, and where the latter was a real-life star singer, Leslie Cheung. See also John Snelson's essay in the present special issue.

they clearly have a lot to tell us about cultural transfer, as social and artistic stereotypes about opera in Paris in the last quarter of the nineteenth century are reconfigured for societies both around 5,000 miles away, but in opposite directions in more ways than one. Successive adaptations introduced further kinds of transfer, above all between genres, as versions were produced in comic, slapstick, pornographic and animated cinematic styles (among many others), transplanting the narrative into new musical contexts ranging from operetta and cabaret to glam rock and Cantopop. One distinctive genre that could hardly avoid making a contribution to the growing canon of the Phantom on film was the slasher movie, popular above all in the US in the 1970s and 1980s. A murderous protagonist who seems supernaturally difficult to catch or kill, a young woman who is the particular object of his attention, a setting that lends itself especially well to special make-up effects: the story clearly offered the perfect framework, and in 1989 an attempt was made to exploit the success of Robert Englund in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films by casting him as the Phantom in Dwight H. Little's *The Phantom of the Opera*.[44] Apart from the *de rigueur* gory killings, of which there are more and more as the film goes on, it is a relatively sophisticated retelling, in which both the Phantom's disfigurement and his apparent immortality are explained in a flashback brought on by a performance of Gounod's *Faust*.[45] While playing one of his own compositions in what looks like a brothel, Erik Destler's talent is recognized by a mysterious individual who says the world will love him for his music if he weds his soul to the devil; the bargain concluded, he adds "but that's *all* it will love you for," maiming Erik with his diabolical touch. Production values are high: the representations of operatic performance are as elaborately realized as the prosthetic make-up.

As this musical Faustian pact hints, from the point of view of Leroux's interest in what should remain of operatic art and of the significance of *Don Juan Triumphant* within his narrative the film is also conceptually quite elaborate. It is the 1885 score itself, unearthed in the dusty "rare and out of print" section of

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[44] Englund plays Freddy Krueger in all of the many films of the original franchise from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (directed by Wes Craven in 1984), until 2003. *The Phantom of the Opera* (1989, 21st Century Film/Breton Film/Columbia Pictures/Dee Gee Entertainment, USA) also starred Jill Schoelen and Richard Dutton.

[45] *The Phantom of the Opera* (1989), 24'53"–26'43."

"Bennett's Music Library" in New York City, that sets the story in motion. Broadway hopeful Christine Day wonders what scorched the pages, and then experiences an apparent hallucination when the notes on the page appear to bleed (see Fig. 7; this recalls the passage in Leroux where Christine Daaé says that it is as if the score had been written in the Phantom's own blood).[46]

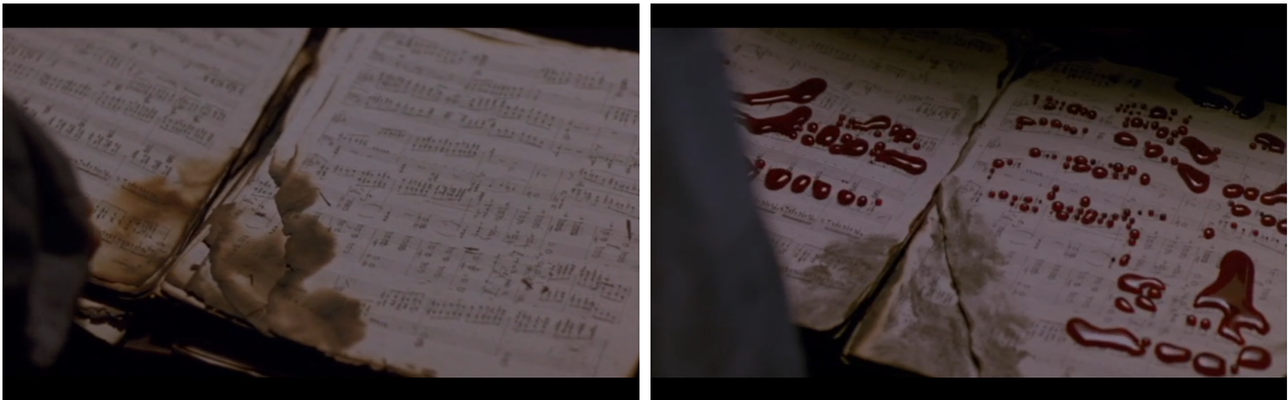

Figure 7: the 1885 version of Erik Destler's *Don Juan Triumphant* in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1989), 5'45"–6'10."

Nevertheless she determines to sing the main number at her forthcoming audition for a new show, where the power of the music, an accident with a scenery counterweight and a broken mirror contrive to send her abruptly back in time to London in 1885.[47] There she plays Siébel in *Faust* and acts as understudy, then replacement, for Carlotta as Marguerite: essentially the basic *Fantôme de l'Opéra* story, without the chandelier but featuring prostitutes, violent cut-purses and murdered opera critics by way of compensation.

When the climax in the underground lair of the Phantom is reached and he has been shot several times (by the police and by Christine herself), and then apparently burned to death, another broken mirror returns her to New York in the

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[46] *The Essential Phantom of the Opera*, 182 (Chapter 13).
[47] Judging by the date on the newspaper at 43'15" and on the headstone at 43'44," although various published synopses of the film state 1881, the apparent date of the events described in *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*. The significance of 1885 is unclear, although the location in late-nineteenth-century London allows the film to borrow from the general iconography of the era of Jack the Ripper (c. 1888).

present. On regaining consciousness she is promptly offered the lead role in the new musical. The show's principal financial backer invites her to a reception, but as she waits for him to get ready, she makes another archival discovery, this time 1980s style (Fig. 8): a floppy disk containing the same hit song, "Your eyes see but my shadow," now set unambiguously before the viewer as much as the heroine.

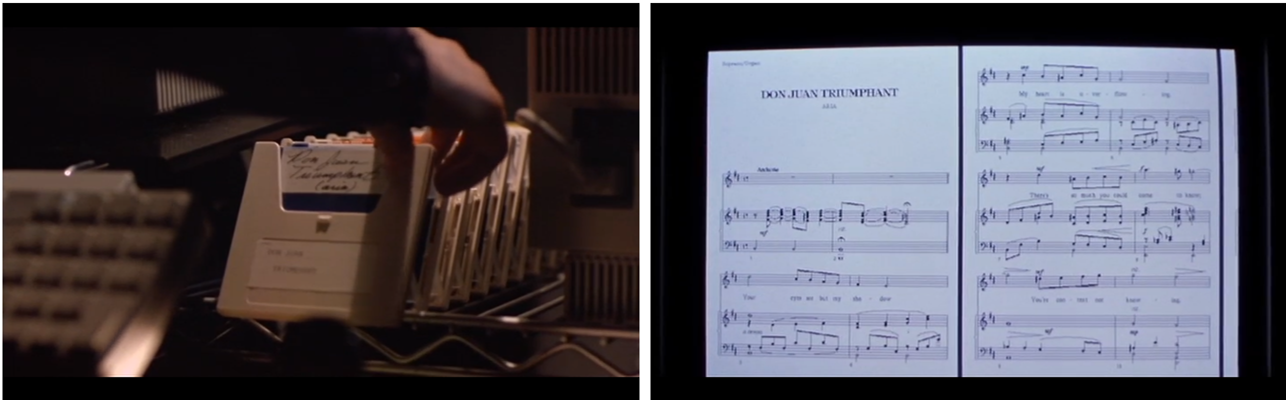

Figure 8: the c. 1985 version of Erik Destler's *Don Juan Triumphant* for organ and soprano in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1989), 1.21'21"–35." The song was composed by Misha Segal.

Christine desperately tries to silence the playback so as not to draw attention to her discovery. But the music is not the only unwelcome revenant: the investor looks suspiciously like the Phantom! Furthermore, because this is a slasher movie, this will plainly not be the last time Christine encounters him. Even after she has pulled his prosthetic face off, stabbed him with an ugly-looking sculptor's instrument and thrown both floppy disk and print-out of the music file into the sewer in the street outside for symbolic good measure, he and the theme of "Your eyes see but my shadow" will keep coming back.

No other screen adaptation takes so literally Leroux's motivating idea of opera buried and resurfacing a century later. In doing so, and in tying its notion of artistic inspiration so firmly to longevity (and to the instruments of preservation, including scores, libraries and computers) if not actually to eternity (in the diabolical pact), Little's film makes the same point as the novel: in the context of an Opéra repertory stagnating around *Faust*, there is a seductive attraction in the

idea of a solid physical representation of the truly exceptional work travelling onward through time, untouched by changing fashions or production practices. All the better if the origins of that work can also somehow be rationalized in terms of the eternal too, by being located with inspiration that is not just exceptional but explicitly supernatural. Although the framing conceit of this adaptation may be jarring, and "Your eyes see but my shadow" may not be everyone's idea of "music that consumes all those who come near it" any more than "Pastel Minuet" was in 1925, Little's film does deal very neatly with the notion of the barely imaginable, radically modern that the original *Don Juan Triumphant* embodied: Segal's 1980s show-tune can co-exist with nineteenth-century performances of Gounod's *Faust* because, style and genre aside, it is quite literally Music of the Future.

More important for my present purposes, this adaptation also finds a way of saying something significant about the nature of music in the context of the Phantom on film more generally. Thanks to the inviolable rules of the slasher-movie genre recalled above, just as the villain will survive whatever the heroine does to kill him off, so will the music persist. As the Phantom says in the final recognition scene, "love, music: they're forever." But the music's persistence will be at a level that exceeds its presence-or-not in the diegesis. In the last moments of the film, which take place at an unspecified time after the Phantom's final unmasking and ostensible death, Christine stops to give money to a street busker whose face is hidden beneath the brim of his hat.[48] As she walks on, what he is playing segues from the sonic wallpaper of a (*the*) Boccherini Minuet to a more direct musical address: "Your eyes see but my shadow" again.[49] This eerie thematic transformation is rendered still eerier as the sound evolves from its thin presence in the sound-space of the street to a richer, more reverberant profile that gradually crowds out the noise of other pedestrians and passing cars, and finally even that of Christine's breathing. It is as if her being forced to confront the fact that this Phantom, even more brazenly than his predecessors, refuses to be bound by normal temporal rules prompts the audience's being forced to confront a

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[48] It could be minutes later—the setting is equivalent to the one immediately preceding, and to the opening of the film, a busy New York street in the evening, and Christine appears to be wearing the same clothes and carrying the same bag—but the conventional story-arc of the slasher movie suggests it might be days or weeks.

[49] *The Phantom of the Opera* (1989), 1.25'46"; the famous Boccherini movement is from his quintet in E major op. 11 no 5.

similar mobility in the music. “Your eyes see but my shadow” moves frictionlessly back and forth between providing commentary on the scene and being in the scene itself, in its 1980s synthesizer realization in B minor (at 1.21’35”); broken up into repetitions of the head-motif, again starting on D but this time in G minor, over a restless orchestral accompaniment for Christine’s moment of dynamism when she stabs the Phantom (1.24’10”); the initial phrases of the theme in G sharp minor, full orchestra, as she escapes the building (1.24’40”); plaintively in B flat minor by the solo violin (1.25’46”); and then on dramatic, sweeping strings back in G sharp minor at the very end of the film, moving even beyond the boundaries of the narrative to usher in the credits (1.26’15”).

In the interval since *Yeban gesheng*, this particular kind of drifting unmoored between underscore and diegesis had of course become a staple technique of music for cinema—certainly of cinema about music, as the example from *Amadeus* with which I began attests. Notwithstanding the prominent critical status of that film and of the 1925 *Phantom of the Opera*, and the compelling musical conundrums they both present, it is not my intention to suggest that adaptations of Leroux played any special role in developing that technique. They do, however, furnish especially productive material for thinking about the location or source of music in cinematic narrative in the broadest sense; as I have been arguing, that is the question they have all, to a greater or lesser extent, inherited from their own source. They all explore its implications far beyond the basic issue of whether the source of the music is visible in the frame; the different definitions of “source,” indeed, are central to that exploration. To return for a moment to Little’s 1989 adaptation, it is important to note that those implications can be traced in the montage as well as the sound design: a more subtle disorientation is effected when the slow panning shot that begins by matching the aural progress of the music (1.21’43–45”) is decoupled from it when the shot returns a few seconds later (1.21’57–58”), just as is the case with the example from *Amadeus* with which I began. As the spectator sees measure 11, “tenderly, you could see,” the audience hears bar 8, “There’s so much you could come to know.”[50] This bifurcation draws attention to itself for two contextual reasons, the first being that the slow panning

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[50] The first stanza in full is “Your eyes see but my shadow / My heart is overflowing / There’s so much you could come to know / You’re content not knowing / Tenderly, you could see / My soul.”

mimics the effect of the music notation/playback software, so that it is unclear whether the camera is moving or the music scrolling past of its own uncanny accord. The out-of-synch return thus suggests something even more uncanny: a malfunction, or, as in the 1925 example with which I began, a demand to be read that challenges the notation's very legibility. Either way, it represents another parable of the mysteriousness of notation in cinematic representations of music in general, and of *Don Juan Triumphant* in particular.

The second aspect of this example of late-twentieth-century film montage to have a bearing on the Phantom's composition is also related to an idea initially raised in the distribution of the 1925 adaptation: the self-reflexivity of the Phantom's music. "Your eyes see but my shadow" begins to escape the diegesis of this scene, seemingly moving inexorably both out of Christine's control (as she struggles to turn it off) and out of the audience's sense of sonic proportion (as it becomes more and more overbearing). Above all it is self-reflexive when it reaches the asynchrony described above, when it may be said to be accompanying itself. To put it another way, rather than straightforwardly representing the sound that a plot situation makes, at this point the song effectively forms the nondiegetic soundtrack to a situation in which it is diegetically playing.[51] In doing so, just as in the case of Lon Chaney's unmasking scene, it becomes music about music: in this case music (heard) about the same music (seen). It becomes a music that is "there" not only in the sense of being determined in the audio mix, but also "out there" in the plot world and beyond.

Given the genre and the particular contribution to it by Robert Englund, it is difficult not to hear the theme as "out there" in the *franchise* world too, ready to midwife leitmotivic rebirth of the characters (not just the Phantom), the plot, other Phantom-on-Film intertexts, and music-video style combinations of all of these things.[52] But rather than merely becoming part of an increasingly standardized convergence culture, this *Don Juan Triumphant* instead rises toward that same

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[51] This idea is related to some of those explored by Giorgio Biancorosso in "Beginning Credits and Beyond: Music and the Cinematic Imagination," *ECHO: A Music-Centered Journal* 3/1 (2001): www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume3-Issue1/biancorosso/biancorosso.pdf.

[52] Various internet sources suggest that the framing narrative in New York was added at a relatively late stage of production precisely as a means of facilitating a New York sequel. Still others show "Your eyes see but my shadow" in various reincarnations, for example www.youtube.com/watch?v=zH1m_8Bd9ps.

meta-layer alongside earlier pieces with the same or equivalent titles, not confined to particular film-worlds but, the more of them one hears, seemingly distended across the whole corpus of Phantom of the Opera films, inter-referential as they are, such that it constitutes a progressive or iterative process attempting to pin down a kind of musical evocation not easily accounted for in terms of diegetic and nondiegetic.

Conclusion: pressing play

In her attempt to account for what *Yeban gesheng* stores up of its unique political and musical circumstances, its oscillation between surface social didacticism and deeper metaphor, Yiman Wang links the humanizing of the Phantom to what she calls his de-acousmatization, the decisive location of his singing voice with his physical body.[53] But his compositional "voice" is different, as these examples have shown: it has a much less determined relationship, across a number of adaptations, with physical embodiment. It escapes the score, yet can be trapped (temporarily) within the magnetized particles of a floppy disk or (symbolically) in a music box playing a half-finished song that will be heard performed in its entirety only at the end of the film (as in Ronny Yu's remake of *Yeban gesheng*).[54] These objects, like all the *Don Juan Triumphant* ciphers, stand for an impenetrable kind of work in progress, for music's mysterious potentiality, whether that is expressed through a capacity to effect political change or, in the extreme case described above, literally travel through time. And the clearly advertised elusiveness of the "voice" that speaks through them, no doubt, stands for our imperfect ability to understand what it is saying.

The dilemma faced by cinematic adaptations of *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* is to this extent no different from that of films about prized historical music or musicians, and in particular "genius biopics" in the mold of *Amadeus*: how to make the viewer understand for him- or herself that the object of the film's attention is fundamentally distinct from all the competition, even if this is not clear to everyone, or for some reason or other controversial, within the narrative.

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[53] Wang, *Remaking Chinese cinema*, 115: "To make the phantom a palpable audio-visual unity, he must be unveiled or "de-acousmatized."

[54] *Yeban gesheng/Phantom Lover* (1995), 33'28"–34'35."

Performers may be shown playing or singing different music, often more difficult but sometimes, as in for example the anti-"operatic" plot of Joel Schumacher's adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, easier and more self-consciously "natural."[55] They may ultimately be shown receiving the approbation of an audience, but, as the Phantom films almost all take the trouble to show very clearly (and as *Amadeus* does too), no audience is to be trusted for long. (Content with sitting inanely through *Faust* for the hundredth time, its members are liable to react badly if challenged by the perversions of modernity. Leroux's Phantom might die alone of a broken heart in the bowels of the Opéra, but in most other adaptations he is pursued, sometimes by the forces of law and order, sometimes by what seems like the whole institution: not only the audience but everyone the other side of the curtain too, from stage-hands in the fly-tower to the rat-catcher in the cellars.)[56] Representing the genius of composition, on the other hand, is complicated precisely by its need for mediation by performance; apart from the circumstantial aura of its paraphernalia (manuscript paper, a keyboard instrument) there is little that is readily visual about its essence or origin—but little that is distinctively aural either.

In several important ways, then, the interest of *Don Juan Triumphant* for film studies lies in what is effectively a meditation, now extending over more than a century, on that central tenet of the philosophy of the soundtrack, the ontology of its music. Not only in the here-and-now of the cinematic moment, but in the questions of origin and destination that, in the *Fantôme de l'Opéra* rhizome, always attend it. Even in the score on the music stand in 1925—in fact above all in this, its most ostensibly basic presentation—the work establishes a continuum of ambiguity between where the piece comes from (beyond-ordinary-mortal inspiration, or as the Phantom says darkly, "scorched," but not "by the fires of heaven")[57] and where the *music* comes from (not the notation in front of us, nor the organ we can see being played, nor other vessels susceptible to destruction such as floppy disks—and not memory, of which they are analogues). Successive

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[55] *The Phantom of the Opera* (2004); see John Snelson's essay in the present special issue.
[56] Apart from the 1925 and 1937 adaptations discussed here, examples of such large-scale pursuits include that of the final scenes of *Il fantasma dell'opera* (1998, Medusa/Cine 2000, Italy, directed by Dario Argento).
[57] *The Essential Phantom of the Opera*, 178 (Chapter 13).

adaptations elaborate upon this ambiguity, creatively confusing aesthetic and political sensibility, the voices of teacher and pupil (as in 1937), or pointing out (as in 1989) that the immortality we associate with inspired musical works and their composers may be conceived of both as being propelled forward in the direction of posterity *and* as being thrown backward in the form of supernatural visitations from the future. All question the source or origin of this supposedly great music, and in doing so also question, in a popular culture context, the source or origin of great music full stop. All present extreme cases of operatic and para-operatic musical presence and absence: means of musical production (organological, philological, technological), visible acts of musical execution (performer-prop-listener networks), missing or otherwise elusive sound. In any given adaptation *Don Juan Triumphant* might not be “music that consumes all those who come near it,” but it is almost always a new reflection on what might be called the acousmatics of musical source-studies.