

# **The Use of Polystylism and Personal Voice in the Music of Elliot Goldenthal**

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All of the musical examples in this paper are transcriptions made by the author to the best of his ability from sound recordings. The exceptions are excerpts from the *Alien 3* manuscript that was obtained from the PDF upload website Scribd.com. Although not technically published nor provided by the composer, the author is in no doubt as to the authenticity of this manuscript.

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## *The Use of Polystylism and Personal Voice in the Music of Elliot Goldenthal*

At first glance, the notion of a composer creating a consistent personal voice through polystylism may seem to be a contradiction. Personal voice implies that a composer has created an idiomatic vocabulary of musical patterns, sounds, gestures etc., typically within a limited range of genres, that he or she uses repeatedly in enough works for a critical listener to identify that vocabulary as of that specific composer. Polystylism suggests the opposite; that of multiple vocabularies taken from a multitude of genres, possibly implemented across several disparate works. If a composer indulges in polystylism, at what point does it become impossible for that composer to create a sense of coherent identity? Admittedly, this question has no definite answer, and it is certainly the case that some composers are not interested in their work possessing a single “brand.” However, it is fair to say that composers who work with polystylism or multiple genres do run the risk of neglecting a sense of “through-line” that could be beneficial not only to the practical applications of marketability and notoriety, but also to a more transcendent level of meaning through juxtapositions and hybridization. The music of American composer Elliot Goldenthal stands as a strong example of music that possesses a clear, personal voice while also embracing a variety of polystylistic techniques. Goldenthal’s output from the late 1980s to the early 2000s consisted mostly of projects in the genres of film music and orchestral concert music; projects that made him well known not only for his dexterous command of the orchestra within different styles of classical music, but also for his embracing of various styles outside of classical and film. His

use of polystylism and genre-referencing was so unique in the film music world that he quickly became defined by it when compared to other film composers (occasionally earning the label “experimental” from film music critics)<sup>1</sup>. Yet for all his explorations of various styles, the composer’s music still possesses a singular voice that transcends rudimentary genre referencing. This paper will examine Goldenthal’s music with regards to its polystylism and musical consistency. This will include a documentation of Goldenthal’s personal vocabulary of musical gestures and orchestration that remain consistent from project to project, along with his uses of polystylism and how they inform and transform a scene of a film or a moment in a piece of concert music. I will then present an analysis of Goldenthal’s score to the film *Titus* from 2000; a piece of music that represents a culmination of his various styles into a single piece of work.

## I.2 – Biography

Elliot Goldenthal was born in Brooklyn on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1954. He studied piano and was inspired by music from multiple genres from an early age. His interests by his teenage years included composing classical music while also performing in a touring blues band.<sup>2</sup> Speaking in an interview, he cannot recall whether it was classical or jazz that influenced him towards becoming a composer:

“I was extremely young. Two-ish? Three-ish? I was exposed to possibly Beethoven or Louis Armstrong, whatever. The sense of logic in the music was very attractive to me, like little bits of information that made up a whole. I remember being attracted to that as opposed

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<sup>1</sup> “Composers: Elliot Goldenthal,” Filmtracks.com, last modified May 30, 2015, <http://www.filmtracks.com/composers/goldenthal.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> “Composers: Elliot Goldenthal,” Filmtracks.com,.

to just melody...If you listen to Louis Armstrong's solos, without him studying Beethoven they're very Beethovenian. There are little bits of motivic material that get developed in an effortless way, especially in the early solos."<sup>3</sup>

He went on to study composition at the Manhattan School of Music, earning both a Bachelor's (1977) and Master's (1979) degree while he studied with John Corigliano for seven years. He also became a student of Aaron Copland during the last decade of the famous American composer's life.<sup>4</sup> Even from just these two teachers, one can predict the polystylism of Goldenthal's work. Copland is of course famous as being one of the most prominent composers to bring North American vernacular styles into the classical concert hall. A few examples include cowboy songs in *Billy the Kid*, Mexican folk tunes in *El Salón México*, a shaker hymn in *Appalachian Spring*, and 1910-20s jazz in *Three Moods* and the *Piano Concerto*. Corigliano did not combine styles from various genres in his music so much as combined different sub-genres of classical music into self-contained pieces (what some might refer to as post-modernism or pastiche). One of his most successful combinations is putting together extended techniques from the Polish avant-garde and atonality with very romantic and expressive harmonies and melodies, often with very detailed programmatic purposes. Prime examples include the *Clarinet Concerto* and *Symphony No. 1*. He has also incorporated older styles into various contexts, such as Rossini and Mozartian writing in the opera *Ghosts of Versailles*.

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<sup>3</sup> Elliot Goldenthal, "A Moving Image of Elliot Goldenthal," interview by Frank J. Oteri, New Music Box, Jan. 3, 2003. [https://2104310a1da50059d9c5-d1823d6f516b5299e7df5375e9cf45d2.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/nmbx/assets/46/interview\\_goldenthal.pdf](https://2104310a1da50059d9c5-d1823d6f516b5299e7df5375e9cf45d2.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/nmbx/assets/46/interview_goldenthal.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Filmtracks, "Composers: Goldenthal."

These influences would guide Goldenthal's interests not only in concert music but also in the shape of collaboration, scoring student films at NYU<sup>5</sup>, and writing music for theater projects after meeting his to-be lifelong partner and collaborator Julie Taymor in 1980<sup>6</sup>. His first major foray into Hollywood was scoring Gus Van Sant's small-budget drug dealer drama *Drugstore Cowboy* in 1989. His first big budget project was David Fincher's *Alien 3*, for which the composer devoted over a year of work on between 1991 and 1992. With that experience, Goldenthal had solidified himself as an A-list composer for film, and he would spend the rest of the 90s writing for a variety of movies and classical commissions. His projects almost always dealt with dark, serious, supernatural, or grotesque/over-the-top subject matter, for which he gained a reputation of writing some of the most aesthetically challenging music for film at the time. His efforts symbolically culminated in his score to Taymor's film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in 2000. He continued scoring films for a few years after *Titus*, winning an Academy Award for *Frida* in 2002 (also directed by Taymor). After 2003, Goldenthal's output in film diminished in order to concentrate on concert works. He continues to score all of Julie Taymor's projects for film and theater that require original music.

## **II Stylistic Consistencies**

### **II.1 Motivic and Harmonic signatures.**

I will begin this analysis by identifying significant musical ideas in

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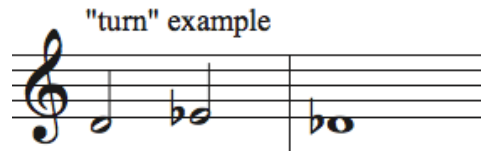
<sup>5</sup> Goldenthal, interview, New Music Box.

<sup>6</sup> Don Shewey, "United in Their Love of the Outsider," *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/27/movies/film-united-in-their-love-of-the-outsider.html>.

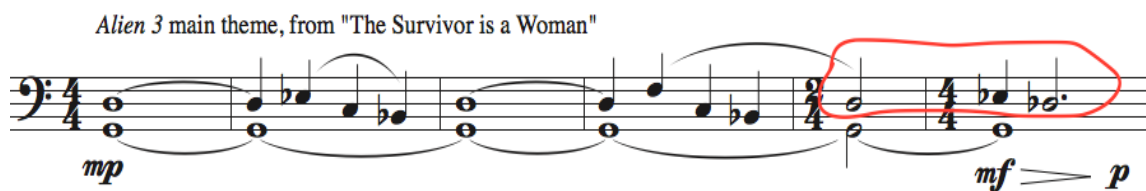
Goldenthal's work that can be consistently charted over the course of several projects. These ideas act as the glue that keeps the composer's voice consistent despite the forays into wildly varying musical styles. After establishing a lexicon of personal signatures, an analysis of his polystylistic endeavors will take place.

### II.1a – Melodies incorporating 3-note chromatic sets

Many of Goldenthal's melodies incorporate a 3-note chromatic set that gives the music a distinctive quality (notated in set theory as [0, 1, 2]). The most common appearance of this set is a downward turn; a starting note ascends a half step, and then descends a whole step:



This "turn" motif often appears at the end of melodies or musical passages with the effect of disrupting any sense of diatonicism, such as in the main theme from *Alien 3* which appears here in G minor:



Finishing melodies in this manner reliably gives Goldenthal's tunes a sense of tension. When the "turn" motif appears isolated by itself, it is usually to convey a

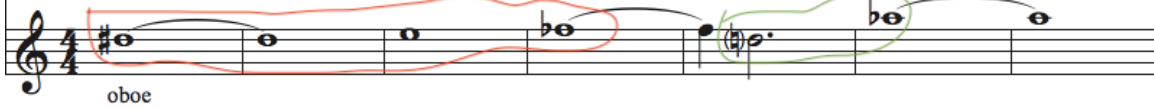




Riddler theme from *Batman Forever*, heard at 1:40 in "Nygma After Hours"



theme from *Sphere* and *Symphony in G sharp minor*, heard at 0:40 in "Main Titles" on *Sphere* soundtrack



Even when the [0, 1, 2] set is not explicitly stated, its presence can still be felt in some of Goldenthal's themes that adhere to more predominantly diatonic scales:

"Pavane for Solace" from *A Time to Kill*



"Born into Darkness" from *Interview with the Vampire*





Goldenthal appropriates this ostinato idea later on in the film for a harrowing action scene 1:00 into “The Explosion”:



The ostinato does sometimes appear in guises more similar to Glass’ music, but Goldenthal’s choice of harmonic progress remains distinctive, such as in “Flight to the Wasteland” from *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*. Regardless of the scene, the ostinato always succeeds in generating a sense of forward energy, making it ideal for transitional scenes and passages of music, in addition to action.<sup>8</sup>

Goldenthal also employs a two-note ostinato that acts a sort of reduction of the 4-note ostinati. They appear as intervals of a major 3<sup>rd</sup> and minor 3<sup>rd</sup>:



It’s rare for Goldenthal to present these ostinati without metric and harmonic variation. A traditional Glassian appearance of this idea occurs 1:50 of “Escape”


<sup>8</sup> Other appearances of the 4-note ostinati include “Defrosting” from *Demolition Man*, “Manifest Fire” from *Sphere*, and 1:10 into “Plantation Pyre” from *Interview with the Vampire*.

from *Final Fantasy*. More clever and interesting appearances can be heard in the “Main Titles” from *Sphere*, and “Clair’s Nocturne” from *In Dreams*.

### II.1c – Octatonic Collections


The [0, 1, 2] chromatic set previously discussed was possibly generated from Goldenthal’s consistent mixing of octatonic and chromatic scales for non-diatonic melodies. These patterns reveal themselves most plainly in the composer’s longer melodies dealing with subjects of pain and suffering. Two basic examples appear in *In Dreams*:

primary material from "Elegy Ostinato" from *In Dreams*



chromatic note

melody from "Clair's Nocturne"



octatonic scale 1      octatonic scale 2

The image contains two musical staves. The first staff, titled "primary material from 'Elegy Ostinato' from In Dreams", shows a melodic line in treble clef with a red oval highlighting a chromatic interval (two adjacent notes) and an arrow pointing to it with the label "chromatic note". The second staff, titled "melody from 'Clair's Nocturne'", shows a melodic line in treble clef with two brackets underneath. The first bracket, labeled "octatonic scale 1", covers the first four notes. The second bracket, labeled "octatonic scale 2", covers the next four notes, which include two sharps.

The rising stepwise octatonic scale, seen above in “Clair’s Nocturne,” often appears in isolated 4-note collections as basic transition material throughout the composer’s works, usually conforming to the set [0, 1, 3, 4]. A much more fleshed out example comes in *Titus*, in which I will discuss later during that part of the analysis.

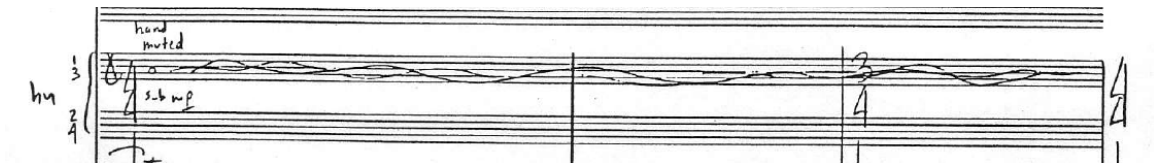
### II.2 – Orchestration Signatures

In addition to melodic consistencies, there are several orchestrational ideas in Goldenthal’s music that reappear often in his work. Given the seriousness and

zaniness of many of his subject matters, the composer often took orchestrational inspiration from his teacher John Corigliano, specifically from pieces such as the *Clarinet Concerto* and score to the film *Altered States*. Goldenthal's use of extended techniques was far more prevalent than other big budget Hollywood composers during the 90s, and he quickly gained a reputation in the business of writing music that could be challenging to listen to, but worked very well in the proper context.

## II.2a - Brass Extended Techniques

Goldenthal's manipulation of the brass creates everything from anxious fear to madcap goofiness, and is one of his most immediate orchestral signatures. Pitchbending is often used in the composer's orchestral music, usually employed to create eerie atmospheres, either quiet or loud. The effect is achieved simply by having multiple instruments play a single pitch with a very wide and slow vibrato, as in this example from 2:21 of "Status Reports" in *Alien 3*:



While the effect works well for tense situations<sup>9</sup>, Goldenthal also uses this effect in the midst of major triad sonorities. The result is a crazed sense of grandeur; the feeling that something great and terrible is happening all at once.<sup>10</sup> The composer

<sup>9</sup> Further examples include "Blast Off & Surfs Up" from *Batman & Robin*, and "Security Breach" from *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

<sup>10</sup> Particularly effective examples are 2:00 into "Born to Darkness Part 1" from *Interview with the Vampire*, "Event Entry 6-21-43" from *Sphere*, and 11:00 into "Tarantella" from *Othello*.

does use similar pitch bending ideas in woodwinds and strings for quieter moments, but their use by the brass is employed far more often throughout the oeuvre.

Not too far flung from pitch bending are rips and trills. Goldenthal is fond of placing aggressive horn glissandi and high brass trills throughout his action music. For whatever reason, these techniques for brass were seldom used in film music before Goldenthal (though one can find a few examples in the pre-90s work of Bernard Herrmann and Jerry Goldsmith), and the blaring quality of the sounds quickly became recognizable Goldenthal-isms for listeners. The composer was probably inspired by the ending of John Corigliano's *Clarinet Concerto*, which features offstage antiphonal brass ripping and trilling ad lib. very chaotically. In the context of film, these gestures never fail to communicate a sense of grotesque surprise and out of control energy.<sup>11</sup>

Goldenthal also became known for exploiting the lowest range of the brass ensemble as well. Flatulent pedal tones for the bass trombones and tubas are another dependable staple of the composer's action music, which when combined with heavy percussion, have a particularly menacing quality, especially when combined with a variety of mutes. He would also take advantage of the studio recording process of film to have brass-only sessions, in which aleatoric patterns and low textures could be recorded in isolation if need be.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Examples include the aforementioned 1:00 into "Explosion" from *Alien 3*, and the overly raucous "Spank Me! Overture" from *Batman Forever*.

<sup>12</sup> Again, the track "Explosion" demonstrates prerecorded brass textures at about 0:40, and the lengthy action cue "Tocatta and Dreamscapes" from *Final Fantasy* demonstrates both low brass and aleatoric trumpet wails throughout.

## II.2b – string techniques

Common to Goldenthal's atmospheric string music is the use of quarter tone clusters, achieved through a full divisi of the string orchestra by player (probably inspired by Penderecki). The resulting sound is a fragile white noise which, when combined with bowed cymbals, seamlessly compliments the ambient sound design of any suspenseful or supernatural scene. This technique often appears in a sustained guise, such as the below example from "Candles in the Wind" from *Alien 3*.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a string ensemble. At the top left, there is a tempo marking  $\text{♩} = 66$ . Above the staves, there are markings for "ALL STRS. - ORD" and "ORD - - - PONT". The score is divided into five parts: 1st Viola, 2nd Viola, Viola, Cello, and Bass. Each part has a "div a" marking (e.g., "div a 12", "div a 10", "div a 8") and a "pp" dynamic marking. The notes are quarter notes, and there are handwritten annotations for quarter tones: "B-E# 1/4 tones", "E-A# 1/4 tones", "A-C# 1/4 tones", "D-F# 1/4 tones", and "G-A# 1/4 tones". At the end of each line, there is a "gliss ↓ 1 skip" instruction. The score is written on five staves with various musical notations including stems, beams, and slurs.

Occasionally this idea appears in a rhythmized form, creating a pulsing, sawing sound as heard at the beginning of "On Cats Feet" from *Michael Collins*.

Goldenthal is also fond of "walking basses" in a variety of orchestral contexts. He curiously manages to create an anxious feeling from the jazz technique in cues such as the end of "Visit to a Wreckage" in *Sphere*. They also appear in more grandiose contexts providing a sense of propulsion, as at the end of the harrowing "Reno Ho' Part 1" from *Cobb*.

## II.2c – Electronic Instruments

In the midst of Goldenthal’s orchestral music, a couple of electronically generated ideas repeatedly turn up in the work. Although there are several short synthesized and/or processed sounds throughout the composer’s scores (co-developed with his music producer Richard Martinez), two sounds in particular get treated with as much attention as any other instrument in the orchestra. The first is a low, swelling growl sound that resembles a bass trombone. Goldenthal developed this sound for *Alien 3*, inspired by the engines of helicopters while he was writing the music in Los Angeles during the 1992 Rodney King riots. It is prominently heard in “Agnus Dei” from that film, and was used in various instances throughout the composer’s film music.<sup>13</sup>

For the film *Sphere*, Goldenthal created a percussive clockwork sound to accompany suspenseful scenes of characters fleeing their fears. This clock instrument possesses a decent variety of timbres and articulations, making it a useful percussion tool for other contexts. It gets a center-stage moment at 0:58 of “Code Red” from *Final Fantasy*.<sup>14</sup>

There are other orchestrational choices in Goldenthal’s music that appear as often as the ones stated above, however the composer’s choice of those ideas was usually predicated on polystylistic concepts, and therefore will be discussed in that context. Overall, it is difficult to say exactly why Goldenthal reuses certain ideas so

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<sup>13</sup> Other examples include 2:50 into “Under the Top” from *Batman Forever*, 2:10 into “Born to Darkness” from *Interview with the Vampire*, and 0:30 into “Security Breach” in *Final Fantasy*.

<sup>14</sup> Other examples include “Water Snake” from *Sphere*, and the beginning of “Rebecca’s Abduction” from *In Dreams*.



often - melodic, harmonic, or instrumental. In the fast paced and collaborative world of film music (and occasionally concert music when deadlines creep up faster than one anticipates), a composer is often incentivized, directly or indirectly, to appropriate successful ideas from past works into current projects. An idea could be reused for a number of reasons including: not having enough time to write something new, the director wants something that sounds very similar the composer's previous works, the composer really likes the idea and wants to reuse/build upon it voluntarily, the composer is perhaps lazy and does not care about the project enough to create wholly new work, or the composer may just naturally turn repeatedly to certain ideas by instinct or musical philosophy. Whether these particular ideas of Goldenthal's were recycled voluntarily or not, consciously or unconsciously, they created a musical signature that allowed studios, commissioners, and listeners to have reliable expectations of his work, yet did not reign in his gift of moving through different styles when thinking about his projects conceptually.

### **III. Polystylism**

#### **III.1 - Genre and Style**

Before I begin the analysis, a clarification of terminology is in order. A great deal has been written about the topic of genre, not only regarding how genres work but also simply how to define the term. I personally prefer a framework that differentiates between the terms "genre" and "style." I regard "style" as referring to the aesthetic attributes and form of a piece of art, while "genre" refers to not only

the piece of art itself, but the setting and economy in which it is funded, created, presented or performed, and who receives the artwork and how. Daniel Chandler elaborates on this type of definition:

“[This approach] undermines the definition of genres as purely textual types [i.e. piece of art etc.], which excludes any reference even to intended audiences. A basic model underlying contemporary media theory is a triangular relationship between the text, its producers, and its interpreters. From the perspective of many recent commentators, genres first and foremost provide frameworks within which texts are produced and interpreted.”<sup>15</sup>

With regards to Goldenthal, if the composer writes a piece of music for a film that includes clearly jazz inspired elements, he has not suddenly switched from the genre of film music to the genre of jazz. He is still under employment by a film studio to write the music, still collaborating with a director and producer regarding the form and function of the music, and still creating a piece that will primarily be experienced by an audience watching the film either at a theater or on some form of home media, interpreting the music more for its dramatic function rather than how well a soloist plays etc.. The genre of this hypothetical jazzy piece is still film music, but this does not mean that the composer had to limit his vocabulary to the established orchestral tropes of film music (obviously), nor does it mean that this jazz piece could not be performed in the context of a different genre – at a jazz club for instance.

This differentiation between genre and style allows composers and commentators a great deal of flexibility in conceiving a variety of music types within a variety of contexts, without creating the sense of confusion that occurs when only

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Chandler, “An Introduction to Genre Theory,” published January 1997 on Researchgate.net: 5, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242253420\\_An\\_Introduction\\_to\\_Genre\\_Theory](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242253420_An_Introduction_to_Genre_Theory).

the term “genre” is used to account for all these subtleties (or worse yet, the rather unhelpful “post-genre” framework). Placing a single style of music within different genre contexts will yield a multitude of interpretations and meanings. John Frow eloquently demonstrates this phenomenon by comparing two very similar texts placed in two very contrasting genres:

“It is...the different *framings* of the two texts, their placing in different contexts, that govern the different salience of their formal features, and of all the other dimensions of genre that are entailed in this shift of frame: a different structure of address, a different moral universe, and different truth-effects. Or rather, there is an interplay between the cues given by formal features...and the reframing that reinforces their role, and these intertwined effects of form and framing give rise to new patterns of meaning and tone.”<sup>16</sup>

We shall see in Goldenthal’s work that when the composer places stylistic signifiers in the specific contexts of a film narrative or concert program that those re-contextualized elements create a new tapestry of meaning and emotion that would otherwise be absent from a performance of those styles in their original genres.

### **III.2 – Conceptual versus Practical Polystylism**

For the purposes of this analysis, I will be focusing on instances of polystylistic ideas that were created more by conceptual thinking rather than a simple need to fit a setting or tone. Non-orchestral and non-western classical styles do often appear in film, but are usually employed simply to match a clear subject matter or perform some sort of practical function (this is less the case for concert music). For instance, I will be ignoring a dance scene from *Batman Forever* in which Goldenthal wrote a tango simply because that is what the director wanted visually

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<sup>16</sup> John Frow, *Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 9. *Emphasis* his.

in the film. Instead, I will be focusing on examples of polystylism that speak to more intangible qualities of the film or concert work, such as characters' mental states, subtext and symbolism of the story, or juxtapositions between music and subject matter that reveal new interpretations and meaning not present in the subject matter alone. Goldenthal had a knack for approaching his projects in this conceptual manner, which earned him everything from high praise to being criticized as an "over-intellectual."<sup>17</sup>

### **III.2a – Polish Avant-garde, Post-Spectralism/Musique Concrète**

For his first major Hollywood project, Goldenthal sought to create a score for *Alien 3* that pushed the boundaries of what could be considered "film music" at the time:

"I think [director] David Fincher was after something very textural – sonorities where the line between sound effects and music was completely blurred...I composed an electronic score first of various experiments before recording the orchestra...I was very proud of how you can't always tell what's electronic versus what's orchestral"<sup>18</sup>

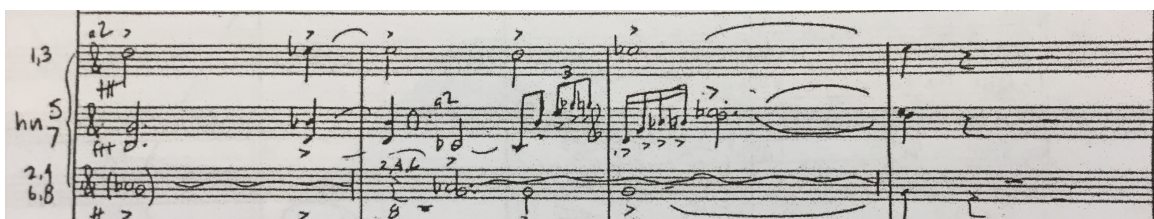
Atonal effects inspired by the Polish avant-garde had been employed as musical signifiers of horror and tension ever since *Psycho* (certainly in the preceding *Alien* scores by Jerry Goldsmith and James Horner respectively), and Goldenthal took the opportunity to build upon the idea of matching musical gestures to visual gestures of violence by purposefully merging his music with the sound effects in the film with musique concrète techniques. Isolated recordings of scissors snipping and moist

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<sup>17</sup> Christian Clemmenson, "Alien 3 review," Filmtracks.com, last updated 8/13/2006, <http://filmtracks.com/titles/alien3.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Elliot Goldenthal, "Alien 3: Requiem for a Scream: Music and Sound," *Alien Anthology*. Blu Ray. Los Angeles: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. 2010.

wiping sounds can be heard through “Bait and Chase,” mirroring the fast movement of the alien creature and grungy set design. The cue “Candles in the Wind” goes a step further and actually orchestrates the sounds implied by the film. Two characters walk down a long hallway filled with candles to light one in memory of a comrade who has mysteriously been killed by the alien. As they walk, the candles begin to be blown out one by one by the unseen monster. Goldenthal adapts this visual imagery into the music with quietly pitch bending winds and brass plus quarter tone clusters in the strings. The effect heightens the audience’s awareness of the sound world of the film itself. This method of orchestration is reminiscent of works of the spectralist movement, who would analyze real-world sounds and map the overtone sonorities onto orchestral instruments. The climax of this cue is particularly clever for its use of triadic material. The usual trope in horror movies is to use dissonant/atonal ideas exclusively for scary situations, while traditionally triadic ideas serve for moments of relief or calm. Goldenthal turns this trope on its head; after three minutes of atonal aleatoric chaos, when the alien is finally revealed visually, the music delivers fortissimo overlapping G major and E flat major triads in the brass, creating an intense sense of awe and cataclism for the monster that will continue to doom of many of the characters throughout the rest of the film:



This juxtaposition of atonality, spectralism, and triadic material creates an effective balance of atmosphere and drama without the music siding too much with one

quality or the other. Goldenthal would reuse these styles throughout his horror and science fiction writing, especially in *Sphere* and *Final Fantasy*.

### **III.2b – Americana, Christian Hymn, and Ragtime**

The film *Cobb* (1994) is a biopic of early 20<sup>th</sup> century baseball legend Ty Cobb, and it depicts its populist subject as, under the surface, being a crazed, violent, racist megalomaniac. The film briefly touches on Cobb's fondness for the southern Baptist hymns of his childhood, especially "the ones with blood in them." Goldenthal takes the tune from the Appalachian hymn "Cleansing Fountain" and uses it as a musical symbol for Cobb's heritage. Throughout the film this tune appears in two forms; its original major mode melody with Americana accompaniment inspired by Copland's orchestral music, and a more troubled version featuring mode mixture to represent Cobb's darker side. The mode mixture often highlights the lowered 6<sup>th</sup> scale degree, which hints at the sound of Goldenthal's signature [0, 1, 2] pitch collections. The signifiers of Copland Americana include predominant use of intervals such 4ths, 5ths, and 2nds, and orchestration featuring light combinations of rhythmic strings and woodwinds. Both these treatments can be heard throughout the cue "Stump Meets Cobb."

Ragtime also enjoys an appearance in *Cobb*, though it is anything but straightforward. During an expository scene in the film, Cobb reminisces about his particularly aggressive methods of playing baseball, and a montage of his exploits on the baseball field plays under his narration. The visuals are edited to feel like an old 1920s film reel, and Goldenthal supplies a solo ragtime piano playing what could

pass as a genuine piece of music from the genre with its syncopation and harmonic language. However, as Cobb's variously violent exploits are shown on screen in slow motion, Goldenthal's orchestra envelops the ragtime piano with atonal brass gestures and exclamations. As the scene progresses, these two identities trade back and forth, the "music of the time" contending with the musical embodiment of Cobb's brazenly rough behavior ("Peach Tree Rag" on album).

### **III.2c – Circus and Free/Avant Jazz combinations**

As mentioned above, many of Goldenthal's projects involved grotesque subject matter, for which the composer often turned to odd instrumental combinations to accompany. For particularly psychedelic scenes, the composer would combine circus-inspired ideas (synthesized calliopes, waltzes) with aggressive Ornette Coleman-inspired jazz saxophone (often multitracked), and synth-brass exclamations distantly reminiscent of funk. The cue "Monkey Frenzy" from *Drugstore Cowboy* swirls these influences together with electric guitars, walking bass, and didgeridoos. In the film, this type of music accompanies a group of young 1980s drug thieves as they raid pharmacies and shoot up afterwards. The style signifiers in the music reinforce the contemporary edge of the setting, while also playing to the unreality and bizarre states of existence in drug culture. "Wonder Waltz" illustrates a calmer high, again with a homemade calliope and processed dulcimer.

A juxtaposition of these ideas with classical music appears in "Pig Fur Elise" from *The Butcher Boy*. The film's protagonist, a humorously deranged Irish boy,

bullies one of his schoolmates who is off to his piano lesson, carrying Beethoven's "Für Elise" with his books. The scene progresses from a slightly tense conversation to an out-of-control fight. Goldenthal's music follows suit by beginning with Beethoven's tune in pizzicato strings, then adding wildly inappropriate free jazz saxophones, then quickening the tempo to an "oom-pah oom-pah" circus rhythm. Walking bass, calliope, and accordion inevitably join in. As with the *Drugstore Cowboy* examples, the brunt of the polystylism here is the circus style, which helps clue the audience in to the abnormal mental states of the characters at hand. The inclusion of virtuosic free jazz saxophone overblowing, growls, and slaptongue is an effective appropriation of the style for purely dramatic purposes – purely conceptual (the scene itself has nothing to do with American culture etc.).

### **III.2d - Big Band/Swing**

Goldenthal scored two Batman films for director Joel Schumacher in the 90s, both of which aimed for a lighter and more cartoony tone than the previous films directed by Tim Burton. The action in these films is particularly over the top and nonsensical, so much so that Goldenthal decided that a jazz influenced feeling would be more appropriate than a brooding orchestra. While the performing ensemble for these films is still mainly orchestral, the writing contains jazz signatures at every turn, especially on cues such as 0:40 of "Obligatory Car Chase." The music is driven forward by walking bass lines, and the brass writing has an overtly shout-section quality to it, complete with syncopations and shakes. The chromatic strings in the high register give the music an insane touch, and one can hear the composer's



beloved upward horn rips throughout. This material is reprised throughout the films for the “throw-away” action scenes, with the more romantic orchestral music reserved for dramatically weightier moments and important climaxes. Again, nothing in the film visually suggests that jazz would be a necessary choice for the music (except for perhaps the city environment of Gotham) – Goldenthal is reacting to the film on a conceptual level, making stylistic choices by abstracting beyond the traditional western orchestral sound of film.

### **III.2e – Baroque, Classical**

Like most orchestral film music, Goldenthal’s de facto language for composition can be described as having a romantic or operatic quality; clear melodies that ebb and flow to match the emotion of a scene and so forth. However, the composer does reference other styles of western orchestral music, most prominently in the score to *Interview with the Vampire*. The film begins in present day, but as the protagonist Louis recounts his life as a vampire to a reporter, the film quickly shifts to the 1700s. After being transformed into a vampire, the story follows Louis’ life into the 1800s and so on back to present day. Goldenthal’s approach to the film’s music went deeper than simply supplying music based on what year the scenes took place. He decided to associate different musical periods with the various characters across the vampire spectrum. He recounts his methodology:

“I used the notion that vampires live hundreds of years, so the oldest vampires got the oldest sounding music. And then Lestat [‘father’ of Louis] had music reminiscent...of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Louis, the sort of brooding character, had more 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic music. Finally the little girl [Claudia] was the youngest and her music almost felt like early 20<sup>th</sup> century Erik Satie piano, very simple, non-giant-romantic

sounding, and then at the end of the movie [back in the present] the Rolling Stones take over for the next generation.”<sup>19</sup>

The “oldest” music Goldenthal describes is marked by baroque qualities. Harpsichord solos are prominent, and the harmonic language is very characteristic of the time period with dominant and diminished chords, idiomatic voice leading, and grace-note ornaments etc.. The 18<sup>th</sup> century music features minuet ideas, a simplified harmonic language that is reminiscent of Mozart or Haydn, and includes instrumentation appropriate for the period such as string quartet. The 19<sup>th</sup> century music is expectedly large in its orchestration and more chromatic (the “turn” motif is quite prevalent here), and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century music has an almost minimal quality to the melodies and solo piano. All these styles can be heard across the cues “Lestat’s Recitative” and “Claudia’s Allegro Agitato.”

### **III.2f – Post Rock**

When working on the film *Heat* (1995), Goldenthal was tasked with providing a soundscape for a modern “cops and robbers” story set in a bleak Los Angeles. Director Michael Mann had temped an early cut of the film with ambient instrumental rock and electronica by artists such as Brian Eno, U2, Michael Brook, and Moby. Goldenthal needed to write a score that fit in stylistically with this “rock without words” aesthetic, while still being suitable to the film’s narrative. The story of *Heat* is not a cut and dry, good guy versus bad guys shoot-em-up. It is a nuanced psychological study of the lives of the protagonists: one a cop, the other a bank

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<sup>19</sup> Elliot Goldenthal, “The Making of Titus,” *Titus*. Blu ray. Los Angeles: Fox Searchlight Pictures. 2013.

robber. Goldenthal's music does not take sides, so to speak. Instead, he collaborated with guitarist Page Hamilton to create an "electric guitar orchestra" sound that would reflect the modern aesthetic of the film while staying out of the way of the drama. The guitar orchestra sound consists of several overlapping tremolo chords that create a very reverberant, ambient texture. This idea communicates to the audience a very contemporary tone through its rock stylistic signifiers, and is very effective against the expansive backdrop of Los Angeles. The sound also blends nicely with string instruments, for which Goldenthal employed the Kronos Quartet for the film's action material. Highlights include the opening cue "Heat" and the second half of "Predator Diorama." The guitar orchestra sound makes a similar but more aggressive appearance throughout the score to *In Dreams*.<sup>20</sup>

### III.2g – Catholic Liturgy

While none of Goldenthal's major works are properly religious (save for *Juan Darièn*, and even then it is meant allegorically), he does use religious references in his music to evoke a metaphorical sense of spirituality or faith, specifically the Latin texts of catholic liturgy. The texts are typically sung by a boy's chorus or full choir, which acts as an immediate signifier of the religious genre regardless of the subject matter at hand. *Alien 3*, for example, is set on a distant prison planet – not a church in sight. But, the inmates have developed a strong sense of spirituality as a means of coping with their isolation. Goldenthal references this character psychology by having a boy's chorus sing the text of "Agnus Dei" (Lamb of God) during the opening

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<sup>20</sup> See the cue "Appellatron."

titles and throughout the film. This musical choice not only reflects the mental state of the characters, but also foreshadows the horrific carnage about to beset the prisoners through the sacrificial lamb imagery. Goldenthal's treatment of the text in "Agnus Dei" is reserved and tasteful, thankfully avoiding any "on the nose" pitfalls a lesser composer may have fallen into (such as *Carmina Burana* ripoffs).

The composer takes a similar approach to the opening of *Interview with the Vampire*. One of the thematic subtexts of the film is a sense of fateful entrapment; the protagonist Louis woefully regrets his decision to become a vampire throughout the film, and he is constantly searching for a sense of meaning and relief to his existence. Goldenthal chose to encapsulate this feeling of "unbelonging" by setting the text "Libera me" (Deliver me) from the catholic requiem mass. The film opens with a calm composition for boy's choir and orchestra, set against visuals of modern San Francisco. The juxtaposition of gothic-sounding music with modern imagery puts the audience in Louis' state of mind – an ancient creature suffering out of place amidst contemporary, jaded bustling.

#### **IV. Polystylism in *Titus***

At the end of the 1990s, Goldenthal was presented with an opportunity to pursue a more radical combination of polystylism with film music. His partner Julie Taymor had begun preproduction in 1998 on a filmed adaptation of William Shakespeare's first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, to be set for theatrical release in late 1999 and early 2000. Often denounced as one of Shakespeare's worst plays by scholars, the story is a tragedy of gory revenge in which a fictional Roman general,

Titus Andronicus, returns to Rome at the beginning of the play after defeating a Goth army and capturing its queen, Tamara, and her three sons and moor servant. He then, out of religious piety, sacrifices the eldest son of Tamara, who vows revenge against the entire Andronicus family. Titus, through his blind devotion to his country, traditions, and laws, then sets into motion a series of missteps that brings Tamara, her two rapist sons, her hateful servant, and a spiteful young emperor into power with which they exact their revenge against Titus. The characters continue to violently strike against each other until most of them end up dead at the end of the play. If that last sentence sounded a bit trite, it was intentionally so, for Shakespeare's play is meant to bring the violence to such a level that one can only laugh at its magnitude, which reinforces its horrific nature. The creators of *Titus* (the film's title) felt something contemporary at hand in this uncharacteristically violent text from Shakespeare. Director Taymor was quoted describing the play as "[seemingly] written for today," and "it reeks of now." The critic Julie Kirgo elaborates further in the film's home release materials:

"Even in Shakespeare's famously violent era...the horrors of *Titus Andronicus* were somehow too much to be believed. In our own time, though – after the many holocausts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Europe, in Cambodia, in Rwanda – we tragically can give credence to it all. This is a story that Shakespeare, prognosticator as well as poet, wrote not just for his own age but for the ages."<sup>21</sup>

This "timeless" or "story for the ages" quality that the play possesses ultimately led the director and composer to embrace multiple time periods and styles in order to bring that quality to life on screen. Goldenthal was already part of the filmmaking

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<sup>21</sup> Julie Kirgo, "Titus," Booklet essay included with Blu-ray release of the film *Titus*, Beverly Hills, CA: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2013.

process during preproduction, and accompanied Taymor to Rome during location scouting. During these visits, Goldenthal was immediately struck by the cultural and historical juxtapositions present within the city, and it was a key inspiration for his approach to the music. He recalls the experience:

“I was encouraged by Julie Taymor and scenic designer Dante Ferretti to accompany them on location scouting in Rome. On day one, glancing at the Palatine Hills from a 1998 Fiat, we saw the great Circus Maximus with the ruins of privileged patricians' villas perched overhead, and I heard in my mind's ear an archetypal ancient percussion ensemble. In that same moment, another car pulled up alongside ours, equipped with a sub woofer - with the pentameters and hexameters of hip-hop blasting through every window. The music cross-faded as I watched a group of Andean pan flute players in native Bolivian garb hawking their tapes and playing their music, which was almost drowned out by an Elvis impersonator with a cheap karaoke setup - replete with cheesy reverb - singing "Jailhouse Rock" in a Neapolitan dialect...well, you get the idea. My mind was put at ease: in Rome - as in this film - it is possible in an instant to embrace eons.”<sup>22</sup>

The production of the film itself followed a similar philosophy. Despite taking place in ancient Rome, the set design, costumes, and mise-en-scène are populated with elements from a wide range of time periods. This visual mashup of styles creates the sense that the film exists in its own uniquely bizarre world, and adds an element of unpredictability to the production, generated by a series of stylistic “disruptions” that throw off the audience’s sense of setting. The opening of the film demonstrates this concept quite efficiently. The first shot fades in on a young boy (probably around 10 years old) sitting in a modest, modern kitchen; it is daylight out. The boy is wearing a paper bag on his head with holes cut out for eyes, pretending it is a helmet. The kitchen table is covered with food and various action figures of soldiers and guns etc., ranging from sword and shield knights to GI Joe-

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<sup>22</sup> Elliot Goldenthal, liner notes for *Titus*, recorded 1999, Sony Classical, compact disc.

esque troops. The boy begins having a battle between the toys, gradually becoming more and more violent: he spills his food all over the table, stabs the action figures with his knife, and uses ketchup for blood. As this occurs, the first disruption takes place: the audio gradually fades in sounds of *real* combat; gunshots, aircraft etc.. The boy seems to be aware of these sounds as he covers his ears – an explosion occurs out of nowhere shattering the window, along with the audience’s expectations of the scene. With the kitchen now on fire, a man covered in dirt and ash suddenly appears and picks up the boy, removing the bag on his head to reveal that the child is crying. The man carries the boy down a flight of stairs and out a door, revealing the second disruption: instead of the outside of a house or apartment, the two exit the building into a Roman coliseum at night. It is suddenly quiet for a moment, until an unseen audience cheers for the man rescuing the boy. The child sees one remaining action figure on the ground – a roman centurion. He then turns around and the camera pans to an entire army of real centurions who begin to march into the coliseum. They are garbed in armor and bear swords and shields, yet this ancient iconography does not remain stable for long. Halfway through this sequence, the style is disrupted yet again, as the ancient warriors give way to soldiers on motorcycles, turrets, and tanks, armed with firearms and riot gear. The scene finally settles as Titus (Anthony Hopkins) enters to begin the play.

Goldenthal’s music for *Titus* contains similar stylistic disruptions throughout the film, though the composer wisely does not always match changes in musical style with changes in visual style. For example, the music that plays during the opening scene described above is very stylistically consistent and is perhaps the

only element in the scene that feels traditional to a Shakespearean adaptation. The entrance of Titus' army is accompanied by orchestra, Latin choir (fitting the Roman theme), and expanded percussion<sup>23</sup>, though Goldenthal is already thinking outside the box in subtle ways. The composer chose Korean drums and gongs after searching for an "ancient sound being used today" to heighten the militarism of the opening scene. He also uses samples of sword clashing sounds as percussion. Goldenthal does include some of his own stylistic signatures here, including the ostinato and trill ideas. This musical sequence ends with a statement of one of the score's few leitmotifs: a rising three-note motif for Titus' elderly general character:



The fact that the music only remains in one style despite the various visual disruptions helps give the scene a feeling of world-building consistency, preventing a sense of surreal randomness from taking over entirely.

Over the course of the following scenes in which Titus sacrifices Tamara's eldest son, Goldenthal still does not shift the music's style in any drastic way. A solemn march is heard as the cast enters the Andronicus tomb (the "turn" motif makes an appearance)<sup>24</sup>. As the Goth queen Tamara (Jessica Lange) pleads for her son's life, the composer introduces the film's second theme, what he refers to as the "pity" theme. This piece is a two-voice invention that combines Goldenthal's signature "turn" motif with octatonic scale patterns. The bottom voice repeatedly

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<sup>23</sup> "Victorious Titus" and "Return to Rome" on soundtrack.

<sup>24</sup> "Procession" on soundtrack.



and obstinately states the “turn” motif every two bars, while the top voice has a more free, pleading quality:

Pity Theme from *Titus*, heard on "Crossroads"

Viola

Cello

While this music is not overtly baroque, the composer describes the idea as Bach-like<sup>25</sup>, symbolizing one character pleading with another. This music’s reappearance throughout the film heightens the sense of it being from the past once more contemporary sounds are introduced. A grumbling bassoon consort presents the composer’s 4-note ostinato signature as the scene ends with various bodies being placed into the tomb<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Elliot Goldenthal, *Titus*, isolated-score commentary track, directed by Julie Taymor, (1999, Beverly Hills, CA: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2013). Blu-ray.

<sup>26</sup> “Revenge Wheel” on soundtrack.

While these juxtapositions of style are rather subtle, the overt style fusing begins in the following scene<sup>27</sup>. The action begins with Titus greeting his daughter Lavinia (Laura Fraser) in the mausoleum of his fallen sons – a tender moment of love and innocence. The film then cuts to outside of the emperor’s palace, where black shawls are draped from the windows indicating the ruler’s recent death. As we see this, a political debate arrives between the factions of two royal brothers vying for the thrown: the kind hearted Bassianus (James Frain), and the power-hungry, spiteful brother Saturninus (Alan Cumming). The debate dissipates when the Roman senators choose Titus as the ruler. These dramatic shifts of focus are accompanied by Goldenthal with a single piece of music<sup>28</sup> in which he must address all these changes in mood while introducing new characters. His approach is centered on the fact that this is the first instance in the film that the action moves away from the classical Roman feeling of armies and sepulchers to the bright outside and power struggles. The cue begins with soft orchestra for the conversation between Titus and Lavinia, with quiet melodies in the woodwinds. This section ends with a solo for the english horn - a moody color that for the composer suggests the dark insides of the tomb in which the characters speak, as well as the “old” age and philosophy of the protagonist. The “turn” motiv is also present:



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<sup>27</sup> 14:40 film timecode.

<sup>28</sup> “Tribute and Sufferage” on soundtrack.

When the film cuts to the modern architecture of the Roman palace, a saxophone enters, playing the same material as the english horn but in a jazzy style:



This stylistic shift is as jarringly out of nowhere as the visual change, and works marvelously to create a sense of anticipation for what is about to happen<sup>29</sup>. This momentary style-disruption is contextualized as the political debate enters. The sax solo, now a multi-tracked duo at this point in the scene, ramps up into a smooth transition to all-out 1950's jazz, which the composer refers to as "Ellingtonia,"<sup>30</sup> complete with drums, full saxophone and brass sections, walking bass, and trumpet shakes. Goldenthal discusses this stylistic choice as a way to reinforce the transition out of the dark tomb into broad daylight, the jazz signifiers communicating a sense of energy and urgency to the young political rivals. The final disruption in style comes as the crowds converge on the palace, and the camera makes a slow pan upward from the crowd to the imposing building. Goldenthal immediately shifts – hard cuts – to full orchestra playing fortissimo minor and dissonant chords against bass pedals. The style is over-the-top operatic, and its symphonic sound immediately conveys a sense of turmoil and doom that was absent from the jazz music. As Titus enters, the Titus motif subtly plays over strings churning on a variant of Goldenthal's ostinato signature.

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<sup>29</sup> If I may insert a quick anecdote, whenever I show this movie to friends and colleagues who are unfamiliar with it, this saxophone *always* results in an exclamation of shock or surprise.

<sup>30</sup> Goldenthal, *Titus* isolated-score commentary track.

This single four-minute sequence effectively demonstrates the ability of polystylism to create a sense of drama within a single composition. The juxtaposition of musical time periods brings immediacy to the characters and production design that a straightforward orchestral score simply would not achieve. The danger here is that this approach could become too simplistic or stereotypical: Titus is old therefore all his scenes are with orchestra, and the emperor is young so he gets jazz etc., but Goldenthal is smarter than that. He does not treat his polystylism as a substitute for leitmotifs, but rather as a direct connection to the drama happening in each scene. This results in a score that is wonderfully unpredictable, yet somehow consistent thanks to the disciplined use of motif and sub-textual reinforcement.

While the orchestra continues to be the primary stylistic voice throughout the film, the polystylism continues to appear when necessary. Goldenthal's penchant for using virtuosic free jazz playing as a means of communicating manic craziness is used in full force. Tamara's two remaining violence-obsessed sons, Chiron and Demetrius, who secretly rape Lavinia as the first of several acts of revenge against Titus, are accompanied by the composer's circus/avant jazz music from *Drugstore Cowboy*, suggesting their warped minds and anarchist behavior.<sup>31</sup> During their attack on Lavinia, Goldenthal tracks one of his Coleman-esque sax solos on top of dissonant string and brass extended techniques (reminiscent of *Alien 3*) for a particularly violent combination.<sup>32</sup> This moment is immediately juxtaposed musically with the "pity" theme as Lavinia begs Tamara to spare her from being

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<sup>31</sup> "Chiron And Demetrius" on soundtrack.

<sup>32</sup> 1:50 into "Wilderness of Tigers" on soundtrack.

raped by the boys. Afterwards, Lavinia is found by her uncle and taken back to the Andronicus home, mutilated and unable to speak. Her relatives, out of complete helplessness, ask the heavens how something so terrible could have happened to one so innocent. Goldenthal musically symbolizes this desperation by drawing upon his exploration of religious music: a boy soprano singing a pagan prayer in Latin over orchestra.<sup>33</sup> The style brings, for a moment, a sense of humbleness to the characters as they come to grips with their suffering. Titus has his own religious moment when, after killing one of his own sons out of rage for defying his orders for the sake of Lavinia, has a vision of angels flying about the horizon with trumpets – a lamb bearing the head of his dead son sits on an alter as a dagger falls into it. This clearly Christian imagery is accompanied by a multitracked children’s choir singing swirling lines of indistinct Latin, the metaphor of the “forsaken son” made plain.<sup>34</sup>

The plot continues to steadily increase the violent actions of the characters to the point of intentional parody. Goldenthal’s objective to use music to address the literary subtext of *Titus* naturally led him to highlight the play’s grotesque juxtaposition of violence and humor. This comes to a head about halfway through the film when Titus, after suffering injustice after injustice, turns from self-pity to thoughts of revenge against Tamara and the emperor Saturninus. This pivotal moment takes place across consecutive scenes. The first is when Titus is at home<sup>35</sup> – two of his sons are in prison (framed by Tamara), the third has been banished from Rome, his daughter Lavinia has been raped and mutilated, and he has had his hand

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<sup>33</sup> 1:20 into “Procession and Obsequis” on soundtrack.

<sup>34</sup> “Vortex” on soundtrack.

<sup>35</sup> 01:21:30 film time code.

cut off thinking it would be taken as a sacrifice to save the lives of his framed sons. As Titus waits with his family to hear of his sons' release, he delivers a soliloquy expressing his despair. Goldenthal remarks, "[This is] one of the big scenes in *Titus* where [Titus] says, 'If there were reason for these miseries, then into limits could I bind my woes,' and he describes that, 'I am the sea and [Lavinia] is the weeping welkin,' and it gets very operatic." The music during this speech is full orchestra performing a tormented crescendo mirroring Titus' building anguish<sup>36</sup>. It is one of the last moments of musical seriousness before the descent into madness begins immediately in the following scene<sup>37</sup>, which Goldenthal discusses:

"In perhaps one of Shakespeare's most absurdist moments, the two heads of Titus' wrongly accused sons, and the General's own severed hand, are cruelly returned to him outside his home. At this nightmarish presentation, Titus inexplicably breaks into laughter. He then commands his handless daughter, Lavinia, to take up his severed hand between her teeth and enter the house. Performance after performance, production after production, audiences nervously laugh at this scene, thus falling into Shakespeare's ingenious trap: the playwright has devilishly induced the audience into a similar state to Titus' - involuntarily laughing at the horror. Such unexpected juxtapositions forced me to find unexpected musical solutions."<sup>38</sup>

The solution to the scene in question presents itself as a circus band: fiddle, drum kit, clarinet, saxophone, and a rather flatulent tuba<sup>39</sup>. The music itself is expectedly crude and bouncy, matching the visuals of the messenger and his assistant presenting the decapitated heads like a sideshow at a carnival. The absolute absurdity of it makes for another poetic moment of disruption: emphatic operatic suffering turning to parody. As soon as Titus laughs and instructs Lavinia to take the

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<sup>36</sup> "Pressing Judgement" on soundtrack.

<sup>37</sup> 01:23:00 film time code.

<sup>38</sup> Goldenthal, liner notes for *Titus: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*.

<sup>39</sup> 2:30 into "Pickled Heads" on soundtrack.

severed hand in her mouth, the musical juxtaposition makes perfect sense, and effectively marks the key turning point in the play's drama.

With Titus having vowed revenge, Goldenthal transforms the circus music from before into a fully orchestrated version as he recruits soldiers to help him counter the emperor; parody has been elevated to power and resolve. The electronic clock instrument from *Sphere* makes an appearance during these sequences to indicate the passage of time. His entourage gathers outside the palace, in which the villains are enjoying an orgy. A slow, atmospheric club beat thumps along to the lugubrious ecstasy of the participants; a texture that the composer refers to as "hip-hop adagio" to emphasize their excess and depravity.<sup>40</sup> As Titus and company shoot arrows through the roof, disrupting the orgy, the music shifts back to intense orchestra, complete with Goldenthal's always trustworthy brass rips and trills.<sup>41</sup>

In the latter acts of the film, the violence subsides temporarily while Andronicus and the Emperor plot their next moves against each other. Goldenthal cycles through his various music styles as needed, though never abandoning the main motif for Titus and the "Pity" theme. When Titus discovers that it was Tamara's sons who raped his daughter, he cleverly ensnares Chiron and Demetrius and delivers them a death sentence. Goldenthal uses the ever-menacing pitch bending technique from *Alien 3* to underscore Titus' vengeance against the boys, reinforcing but never overpowering Anthony Hopkins' menacing performance as the revenge-crazed general.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Both these styles are heard in "Titus' Vow" on soundtrack.

<sup>41</sup> "Arrows of the Gods" on soundtrack.

<sup>42</sup> "Preparing for the Feast" on soundtrack.

In the penultimate scene, in which all the remaining characters come together in the Andronicus home for a seemingly peaceful parlay, Titus secretly serves his guests the remains of the dead Chiron and Demetrius baked into a meat pie. Lavinia enters, and Titus reveals to all assembled that Tamara's sons were responsible for his daughter's mutilation. He then kills Lavinia to save her from her shame, much to the horror of all present, while Goldenthal's religious boy soprano and orchestra gently swell in the background. The tension is now at its zenith. Titus then immediately reveals to all the contents of the meal they have consumed. He stabs Tamara to death and a brawl immediately breaks out. At this moment, when the built-up violent energy of the drama finally explodes, Goldenthal lets rip an onslaught of industrial rock. Heavily overdriven guitars, harshly-processed percussion, and screaming male vocals inject the scene with a Nine Inch Nails sense of nihilism as the main characters maul each other to death over the dinner table.<sup>43</sup> Despite lasting less than a minute, this piece of music is perhaps the film's most jarring disruption; an instantaneous shift between musical "dignity" to unrestrained, anti-theatrical aggression.

With the main cast dead, the final scene, set in the roman coliseum from the film's opening, sees Titus' only remaining son Lucius deliver a closing statement on the outcome of the drama. The little boy from the beginning of the film, who turned out to be Titus' grandson all along, watches as the dead bodies from the fight are covered one by one. The only other innocent survivor of this drama is the newly born son of Tamara's moor servant. The young boy takes the baby in his arms and

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<sup>43</sup> "Vengeance" on soundtrack.



gently carries him out of the morbid coliseum into the sunlight, to which the film ends. After all the different stylistic directions the music has taken over the course of the story, Goldenthal uses the ending as a moment for stability. The final cue is a slow crescendo fantasy on the main Titus motif, now cast in a lushly orchestrated texture<sup>44</sup>. There is still an ambiguity in the music: sonorities are based in stepwise clusters and diads, not triads, and the orchestration is surprisingly bass heavy despite the uplifting emotion of the material. Goldenthal describes his intentions as attempting to express a feeling of people coming together, after having spent the whole film tearing each other apart, to brave the unsure future in solidarity:

“Shakespeare leaves us with a mystery [in the play] whether the baby is going to be kept alive or not. For Julie [Taymor] she wanted the ending [of the film] to be more affirmative where there’s a little bit of hope as the young Lucius slowly carries the baby out of the scene. The music is trying to sooth at this point – it’s trying to let you get into a sense where you can reflect on Shakespeare poignantly showing the hypocrisies in our life. It’s the kind of thing where you really can’t tell if there’s a melody – that the melody is sort of implied. Sometimes the key relationships are kind of implied – neither major nor minor. I finally wrote it in the key of D flat, which is a difficult key for string players to play in, but one thing I’ve found when you write in such a distant key, where you have no open strings on the instrument, and in the winds you don’t have any open tones, everybody has to *listen*, and everybody has to get together orchestrally as a community and as a group because it is so difficult to play in those keys. There’s nothing really natural about it...you have to concentrate, and you have to come together with a conductor. There’s a sense of reflection in the music that I wanted to impart - a sense that there might be hope. I use the word “might” [intentionally], and that’s what I wanted to leave you with. I didn’t want to assault the audience after being rung through the mill by Shakespeare and Taymor. I wanted, along with Julie, to leave you with the ability to reflect.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “Finale” on soundtrack.

<sup>45</sup> Goldenthal, isolated score commentary, *Titus*. Blu ray.

Although not all of the musical styles discussed in section III of this paper appear in *Titus*, the scope of the polystylism within this single film is certainly the result of a composer who had practiced a diverse range of musical styles in several separate projects while consistently honing his sense of personal voice through reuse and reappropriation of materials. The balance in Goldenthal's music between melodic/orchestrational consistency and stylistic shifting allowed the composer to establish a firm identity for his music without restricting his language only to the western orchestral medium. While I do not claim to know how a piece of music becomes "timeless" as the cliché goes, Goldenthal's polystylistic approach in *Titus* at the very least seems to have created a work that is "out of time," just as the filmmakers themselves hoped to achieve visually. It is an approach that could have easily become a jumbled mashup of styles in the wrong hands, but Goldenthal's solid personal voice succeeds in holding the disparate parts together in a transcendent whole. His work is a testament to the power of musical consistency, even in something as small as a 3-note set, to allow composers to imprint their identity onto multiple styles of music, especially in genres that exist primarily in recorded medium such as film.

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