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Minimalism's Impact

Music from *The Lord of the Rings* reveals a transition between old and new approaches to film scoring. Famous films from this era have scores that are dominated by melodies, and have leitmotifs that are memorable and plants an impression into the viewer's imagination on the story itself. However, minimalistic film scoring has made its way with Shore including a number of musical passage of minimalistic structure such as having a single pitch or chord. Minimalistic approaches to film scoring emphasizes rhythmic drives and the avoidance of tuneful melodies in these following films.

Directed by James Cameron, the one who also directed *Titanic*, *Avatar* (2009) was a big box office winner. James Horner, the composer, composes a score that provides an aural link between the Na'vi and non-Western populations. For example, he utilizes a Japanese wooden flute, a shakuhachi, for scenes prevalent in regards to visions of the Pandorian forest. Nasal ornamental vocal melodies, choral chanting, and lots of drumming were some of the sounds in the film that associates with the Na'Vi civilization. Minimalism was prevalent in this film by composing a score that lacks a defining melody in comparison to his previous work in *Braveheart* (1995). A distinctive piece in *Avatar* that reflects this is the Avatar/Love Theme which is a simple four-note rising idea that can be heard numerous times in visions of Pandora. Having repeating patterns and sustained sounds such as the love theme is credible of minimalism having an effect on the score of the film. Simple folklike melodies are sung by a choir of children which are assisted further with orchestral instruments such as the French horn and strings. There is very little need for lyrics or complex melodies to say to the audience that the location is exotic, pure, and reflect the people's innocence that inhabit

the planet.

Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) is an imaginative fantasy that depicts a world with technological advancements to allow people to share dreams, and explores the concept of the dream world. Cobb, an infiltrator of dreams to extract corporate secrets from the rich and powerful, develops a technique that allows him to create multilayered dreams. The influence of minimalist scoring of films can be found in Hans Zimmer's work for *Inception*. By having sustained sounds and repeating patterns, Zimmer is able to support the vision of dream worlds without too much work in emphasizing the dream state. For example, Zimmer incorporates music into three aspects of the story: action on dream levels, signals of a dream ending, and a limbo state where a dream has yet to be constructed. Within each dream the pace of action increases, hence the use of percussive instruments playing at different layers and paces generate an emotion of climax and excitement. Everytime a dream ends, a song is played rather than a consistent melody that is associated with the end of dreams. The song chosen is accompanied by a piano only deriving its repeating rhythm and half-step motion of the bass line. The film ends and opens in limbo where cues of simple, relative sounds are played such as the wind.

Another collaborative film by Christopher Nolan and Hans Zimmer, *Interstellar* (2014) is a sci-fi film that follows astronaut Cooper on a hopeless mission to find another livable planet near Saturn. With all of his struggles, Cooper is able to find a planet through paternal love between father and daughter. Influences of minimalism can be heard through the usage of repetition and long sustained chords paired with electronic and an organ. Furthermore, the most effective example would be the simple sound of a clock ticking which generates great tension in times of essence. Simple long chords of an organ chord can be heard in the 2001 theme with a beginning low register of the organ pedal concluding with an isolated sound of an organ chord.