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Music in Animations

Early 1980s, animated movies were not frequently produced like other film genres. However, with the rise of *The Little Mermaid* this film gave a revitalization to animated musicals. Disney studios being the backing force for the revival of animation returned to creating animations with certain characteristics of the past classics: a fairy story with a strong female role, comic sidekicks for both antagonist and protagonist, and the incorporation of numerous engaging songs.

The Little Mermaid retells an altered happier version of Hans Christian Anderson story. The film is set in an exotic underwater setting which allows Menken to incorporate non-Western sounds. Menken weaves in a number of Caribbean musical elements alongside traditional styles. For example, Sebastian the crab vibes to two calypso numbers *Under the Sea*, and *Kiss the Girl*. Having many songs, Menken ignores the clichés with previously animated cartoons such as nonstop music and "mickey mousing".

The animated film *Beauty and the Beast* uses the same elements as mentioned before on a French fair tale in addition to some adult themes. Just like in the little mermaid, Menken's musical choices are reflective on the locale. This was evident in the song "Be Our Guest" with Lumiere leading kitchen objects in a spectacular sequence of dances and the French revue. Menken adds in some human features to inanimate kitchen objects to elevate the comedy, romance, and enchanted Disney magic that is standard in these films.

Disney does it again by turning to a local African legend by producing *The Lion King* (1994). Unlike the previous films where the musical numbers are sung generally by the characters themselves, in this animated film the numbers are sung by unseen voices. For

example, "The Circle of Life" is an underscore representing the birth of the main character Simba. However, if one were to watch the film, none of the animals are singing the song. Throughout the film there is a mixing of African choral sound with the Western popular music style. This mix gives a breath of freshness to the quality of the score.