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Emotions Unveiled: Romance at the Opera in *Moonstruck* (1987), *Pretty Woman* (1990) and *Little Women* (1994)

Razkrita čustva: Romance v operi – v filmih *Moonstruck* (1987), *Pretty Woman* (1990) in *Little Women* (1994)

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IZVLEČEK

Članek preučuje romantične komedije in romances, katerih zgodba vključuje prizore, v katerih vodilni igralci obišejo operno predstavo. Analiza obiskov opernih predstav v filmih *Moonstruck* (1987), *Pretty Woman* (1990) in *Little Women* (1994) bo odgovorila na vprašanje o smislu in funkciji opere v vrsti romances in postavila te ugotovitve v daljšo razpravo o pomenu zvočnega filmskega traku za romantične komedije in za konvencije zadevnega žanra.

ABSTRACT

The article examines romantic comedies and romances whose narrative includes a scene where the protagonists attend an opera performance. An analysis of opera scenes in *Moonstruck* (1987), *Pretty Woman* (1990), and *Little Women* (1994) will answer questions about the purpose and function of opera in the genre of romance and base these findings in a broader discussion on the importance of the soundtrack for romantic comedy/romance and the particular genre conventions.

Opera music is used widely in a variety of film genres, but there are far fewer examples where the attendance at an opera performance is part of the plot. Nevertheless, “opera scenes” have appeared in a variety of films in the past decades. There is the massacre during a performance of Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Francis Ford Cop-

pola's *The Godfather Part III* (1990). Several opera scenes appear in historical films, for example, the adaptations of *War and Peace*, *Marie Antoinette*¹ or *The Age of Innocence* (1993). There was an alien singing "Il dolce suono" from *Lucia di Lammermoor* in *The Fifth Element* (1997); a parodistic scene in *2001 Space Travesty* (2000), several scenes at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in Woody Allen's *Match Point* (2005) as well as oppressive pictures of Liu's suicide from Puccini's *Turandot* in *The Life of David Gale* (2003) and of Tosca's death in *Milk* (2008). Even the James Bond adventure *Quantum of Solace* (2008) featured a performance of Puccini's *Tosca*.² Several of these opera attendances have found attention in research,³ including Marcia Citron's close reading of one of the few romantic comedies including such a scene: Norman Jewison's *Moonstruck* (Jewison, US, 1987) that uses Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème* extensively throughout the plot.⁴ Citron's observations are to be my starting point for exploring the theme of visits to the opera in this particular genre. *Moonstruck* is followed by prominent examples in the early 1990s: the romantic comedy *Pretty Woman* (Marshall, US, 1990) features a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *La traviata* and the novel-based romance *Little Women* (Armstrong, US, 1994) includes an attendance at George Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles*. By comparing these three films the study will answer questions about the purpose and function of opera in the genre of romance, the correlation between the opera and the film narrative, and the meanings that are created by using opera music as nondiegetic sound. Finally, it will site these findings in a broader discussion of the soundtrack for romantic comedy/romance and the particular genre conventions.

Situating the opera scene

The initial situation of an opera attendance is fairly similar in *Moonstruck*, *Pretty Woman*, and *Little Women*. After about two-thirds of the film has expired, the male protagonist takes the female protagonist out to attend an opera performance. For Loretta (the female lead in *Moonstruck*), Vivian (the female lead in *Pretty Woman*) and Josephine (the female lead in *Little Women*, called Jo throughout the film) it is their first visit to the opera whereas the male leading roles (Ronny, Edward, and Friedrich) appear as opera-

¹ There are several film versions for both subjects. Opera scenes appear, for example, in the latest films: *War and Peace* (Dornhelm, Belgium, 2007) and *Marie Antoinette* (Coppola, US, 2006).

² Wlaschin, Ken. *Encyclopedia of Opera on Screen. A Guide to More Than 100 Years of Opera Films, Videos, and DVDs*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004. It gives a useful overview up to the early 2000s.

³ See, for example, Marcia J. Citron, "Operatic Style and Structure in Coppola's Godfather Trilogy," *The Musical Quarterly* 87 (2005): 423–467; Helen A. Roulston, "Opera in Gangster Movies: From Capone to Coppola," *Journal of Popular Culture* 22/1 (1988): 99–111; Marcia J. Citron, "The Operatics of Detachment: *Tosca* in the James Bond Film *Quantum of Solace*," *19th-Century Music* 34/3 (2011): 316–340. For a more general engagement with opera in films see Jeongwon, Joe and Rose, Theresa, ed. *Between Opera and Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Citron has republished some of her essays lately in her volume *When Opera Meets Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

⁴ Marcia J. Citron, "An Honest Contrivance": Opera and Desire in *Moonstruck*," *Music & Letters* 89/1 (2007): 56–83. *Moonstruck* was also explored by Kathryn Conner Bennett in an article where she compares the use of *La bohème* in Sally Potter's *Thriller*, Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* and Norman Jewison's *Moonstruck*. See Kathryn Conner Bennett, "The Gender Politics of Death: Three Formulations of *La Bohème* in Contemporary Cinema," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 32/3 (2004): 110–120. Anahid Kassabian focused on ethnicity and identification in romantic comedies, among them *Moonstruck*. See Anahid Kassabian, "Songstruck: Rethinking Identifications in Romantic Comedies," *Screening the past* 18 (2005), accessed March 1, 2012, http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr_18/AKfr18a.html.

goers on a regular basis. Scenes that emphasize the social context and the elite character of an opera performance precede the visit. The preparations of the woman protagonist for attending the opera are given a prominent place. Loretta feels obliged to improve her appearance and is seen later on at home with a new dress, new shoes, a new haircut and newly manicured red nails. In *Pretty Woman*, the red evening dress Vivian wears, the exclusive and expensive necklace, and the flight to the San Francisco Opera in a private jet emphasize the elite character of going to the opera. Particular shots convey the specific ambiance, beauty and imposing architecture of the opera houses in San Francisco and New York. *Little Women* hints at several of these motives (e.g. Jo telling Friedrich that she has no dress to wear to the opera) but does not directly play them out. Jo and Friedrich are watching the opera backstage as he obviously cannot afford regular tickets.

Another dominant motive stresses the rituals and rules of attendance at the opera. Opera is considered to be elite, not only because of its upper-class character, but also because it presupposes education and specific behavior. This aspect is most obvious in *Pretty Woman* where Vivian is surprised that there is—as she says—“a band” (meaning the orchestra), and complains about her opera glass not working because she does not know how to open it. The highlight of this inappropriate behavior is the end of the opera scene where Vivian answers the question about the performance posed by the woman in the neighboring box with, “Oh, it was so good, I almost peed my pants.” Edward defuses the situation by simulating a misunderstanding, saying, “She said she liked it better than *Pirates of Penzance*.”⁵ Similarly, *Moonstruck* reveals Loretta’s ignorance in various scenes, for example, when she asks Ronny about the location of the Metropolitan Opera or at the end of the performance, when she is wondering that Mimi “was coughing her brains out, right, and still had to keep singing”. Loretta combines the fatal illness of the operatic character with the performer’s ability to sing and is therefore revealed as a person unable to consider the dramatic principles of operatic performance. Though both Loretta and Ronny are Italian immigrants, Italian opera is not shown as a form of art that is automatically part of their culture. In *Little Women* Friedrich acts as a connoisseur by explaining the plot and the French words throughout the scene to Jo. However, the motive of the uninformed and naïve woman protagonist here is not as dominant as in the other two films.

Obviously, the general settings of an attendance at the opera in romantic comedy and romance share a variety of common motives observable in all three films. It is important to note that this kind of narrative is significant for this genre only and does not appear in this form in any other of the films with opera scenes from other genres mentioned at the beginning.

The narrative of the opera scene

Despite the similar initial situations in *Moonstruck*, *Pretty Woman* and *Little Women*, the particular narrative of the opera attendance itself differs in many aspects. The at-

⁵ Ironically, this Gilbert & Sullivan operetta belongs to a tradition of explicitly non-Continental but rather British music practice that influenced the American Broadway musical. *Pirates of Penzance* was never performed at San Francisco Opera. It was probably difficult to find an Italian opera fitting for the play on words.

tendance at *La bohème* in *Moonstruck* includes scenes prior to the performance, of the actual performance, of the intermission and post-performance and is, moreover, cross-cut with several other scenes outside the opera house.⁶ There are two musical cues from the performance itself. The first one (DVD, 00.59.22-00.59.32) includes only the opening bars of the opera performance after Loretta and Ronny have taken their seats, fading out after a cut to Rose walking the streets of Brooklyn. The second cue (DVD, 01.06.50-1.08.28) features parts of the third picture of *La bohème* where Mimì breaks up with Rodolfo and tells him to keep the cap in remembrance of their love. The narrative of the film and the narrative of the opera are hereby directly interwoven. Mimì and Rodolfo say farewell without rancor (“addio senza rancor”) and also Loretta has decided earlier to marry Johnny and say farewell to Ronny after the opera visit. Although the opera narrative parallels the film narrative here, not only in general but also in many details, the way in which the scene is shot also creates a narrative counterpoint. The scene opens with a shot of a part of the stage design showing the moon (a direct reference to the film), the camera then moves to Mimì who starts singing. A cut to Loretta and Ronny shows Ronny gazing at Loretta who has tears in her eyes. With Mimì’s first “se vuoi” (if you want) there is a close up of Ronny who is looking down (at Loretta’s hand as it is soon clear, he may be asking her nonverbally in Mimì’s words: if you want, I’ll take your hand), then at Loretta’s face again; for the second “se vuoi” again a stage view is offered where Rodolfo wants to approach Mimì but she holds him off. With the third “se vuoi serberla” Ronny moves his hand towards Loretta’s hand and they hold hands at this musically “suspended moment”⁷. After the vocal line and the swelling orchestra have risen to B-flat Ronny kisses Loretta’s hand at “d’amor”; for the first time in this opera scene Loretta looks at Ronny and they exchange intensive gazes at “addio”. With “senza rancor” Mimì and Rodolfo exchange a farewell handshake on the stage and at Rodolfo’s vocal line the scene closes with a long shot on Loretta’s face, her eyes brimming over and with tears running down her cheeks. In contrast to the visual aspect of the operatic farewell scene on stage where Mimì steps back from Rodolfo and then exchanges a rather neutral handshake, the way Loretta and Ronny touch each other and gaze at each other creates a particularly intensive bonding that responds to the emotional intensity of the opera scene as well as to the emotional intensity of their relationship, channeling their suffering, their passion and their love at the pace of the continuous quarter note accompaniment of this passage with the well nuanced musical climaxes.

Pretty Woman features in its opera scene one musical cue where five different musical excerpts from Giuseppe Verdi’s *La traviata* are put together. That the life of Violetta Valery in *La traviata* has specific parallels to that of Vivian Ward in the film (both are prostitutes and fall in love with an upper-class gentleman) is used here to focus on the female protagonists, both Violetta on the stage and Vivian in the audience responding to her fate. The opera scene starts musically from the beginning of the prelude with Edward explaining to Vivian that people either love or hate opera, and that there is nothing in between (DVD, 01.26.48). With a musical cut to the beginning of the first act (DVD,

⁶ A more detailed analysis of all cues accompanying the opera attendance can be found in Marcia Citron’s article “An Honest Contrivance”, 70–73. I particularly focus on the scene in the opera house that uses the music diegetically.

⁷ Citron, “An Honest Contrivance”, 72.

01.27.05), the camera moves to Vivian who smiles, looking quickly to Edward and back to the stage again. Shortly afterwards (DVD, 01.27.16) the music cross-fades to the end of the first act for Violetta's last repetition of "dee volare il mio pensier" (that make my spirit soar) and a cut to the stage shows Violetta singing, then the camera moves from the stage to Vivian and Edward again. A musical cut to the second act (DVD, 01.37.36) with Violetta's passage "amami, Alfredo, amami quanto io t'amo! Addio" (Love me, Alfredo. Love me as I love you! Farewell!) visually provides again first the stage design with Violetta embracing Alfredo and then shifts to Vivian and Edward. Vivian becomes more excited, looking first to Edward, then clenching the balustrade, Edward observes her emotional reactions, she then starts fidgeting with her hand at the "Addio". This pattern is continued in the last excerpt (DVD, 01.28.13), the very end of the opera, starting with Violetta's "rinasce, m'agita insolito vigor! Ah! ma io ritorno a viver! Oh, gioia!" (reborn in me the strength that once was mine! I feel I'm coming back to life! Oh joy!). The camera first rests on Vivian and Edward and then moves to Vivian alone when the musical climax at "gioia" directly parallels Vivian's strong emotional reaction – she is nearly crying. A cut to Edward again shows him emotionally untouched, observing Vivian. With the last bars of the score the camera focuses again on Vivian, now teary-eyed. It is certainly no coincidence that all the musical excerpts in this opera scene focus on Violetta and cover her different states in the three acts: her liberal mind in the first act, her love to Alfredo and farewell in the second act, her death in the third act. This opera scene mainly wishes to relate how Vivian is emotionally touched by opera and by Violetta's fate in particular. Edward solely observes her and does not seem to be emotionally involved at all.⁸

In contrast to *Moonstruck* and *Pretty Woman*, the narrative of the visit to the opera in *Little Women* starts in the middle of the already ongoing performance of Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles*. The film uses three cross-fading excerpts from the duet No. 9 between Léila and Nadir from the second act. The first excerpt already fades in when Friedrich and Jo are still seen at the door of her room after he has invited her to the performance (DVD, 01.18.38). The volume swells until a cut to the stage shows Léila and Nadir. This first excerpt starts in the first Allegro part of the duet where Léila tells Nadir that they cannot meet because of her vow ("Je ne dois pas t'entendre"). When Léila raises her arm to the sky, the camera follows her direction, showing Jo and Friedrich who are sitting in the flies. Friedrich explains the general outline of the plot to Jo, but stops shortly before Léila's "Ah!" on B-flat, accompanied by a I 6-4 chord (G minor) that is used for the transition into the second excerpt from the duet (DVD, 01.19.14). What Nadir explains in this passage, namely that he has sworn to avoid Léila ("J'avais promis d'éviter ta presence"), is not as important as the change of mood in this "a Tempo un poco animato"-excerpt with a characteristic staccato run in the strings. Friedrich explains that "trouble is coming" and Jo is curious about what will happen next. This agitated character is directly transferred to the visual sphere – cuts between the stage and the flies alternate quickly. While Friedrich is still explaining Nadir's words, the music nearly inaudibly shifts to the

⁸ The scene here offers a reading of traditional gender-roles, not only in the general narrative (Vivian being emotional, Edward being rational) but also in the gendering of looks provided by the protagonists and the camera position. For a theoretical background see also Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989; particularly Chapter 3: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 14–28.

third and last excerpt which starts in the Adagio, 5 bars before the final vocal unisono passage of the duet (DVD, 01.19.33). When Léila and Nadir start singing unisono, the camera has both couples in the frame for the first time. Léila and Nadir have taken each other by the hands. This inspires Friedrich to take Jo's hand and the camera to stay with Friedrich and Jo till almost the end of the scene. Friedrich translates Nadir's words, repeating "Your heart understood mine" twice and addressing it to Jo. The intimacy of the flies allows Jo and Friedrich the intimacy of a kiss, only disturbed at the first attempt by a stage worker. Jo and Friedrich finally unite in a kiss at Léila's and Nadir's last phrase ("Ô doux moment!"), the sweet moment transferring from the stage couple directly to the film characters. The curtain falls at Jo's and Friedrich's kiss at the last note of the duet, applause then mixing with a clap of thunder in the black-out.⁹

All three opera scenes demonstrate a distinct narrative where opera plot, opera music, stage action, verbal and non-verbal interaction of the film protagonists as well as the editing of the scene interact within a highly elaborated scheme. Although the musical scene selection (one longer passage in *Moonstruck*, five excerpts from different acts in *Pretty Woman* and three excerpts from one musical number in *Little Women*) and the narratives (cautious and melancholy affection between Loretta and Ronny, Vivian's emotions overwhelming her, strong bonding and kissing between Jo and Friedrich) are different, they share the purpose of being an emotional catalyst for the film protagonists.

Soundscape, film music and opera

To examine how the opera scene fulfills this purpose within the narrative of these romances it is necessary to take a look at their soundtrack in general and its relation to operatic music. Marcia Citron has observed that *La bohème* "plays a major role in *Moonstruck*. [...] The opera's impact goes beyond the surface of the soundtrack and plot."¹⁰ Citron even goes as far as to propose, "*Moonstruck* aspires to the genre of opera-film."¹¹ While this seems convincingly argued for in her article, it is, moreover, interesting to discuss the function of the opera's music in *Moonstruck* with regard to genre conventions. The *Moonstruck* soundtrack consists of 39 musical cues, of which 14 use the music of *La bohème*.¹² About the same number (13 cues) are nondiegetic¹³ cues composed by

⁹ This curtain is obviously inserted for the film narrative only. In the opera the finale of Act II would follow. It is important to mention that the narrative of this opera scene in *Little Women* is neither based on Alcott's novel (where a visit to the opera by Jo and Friedrich is not mentioned at all) nor does it correspond to the opera scenes in the two previous films based on the novel. Both versions from 1933 (Cukor, US) and from 1949 (LeRoy, US) include a scene where Jo and Friedrich are going to the opera (Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1933, Flotow's *Martha* in 1949), but both scenes are very short (about 30 sec. in 1933, only 15 sec. in 1949) and do not lead to any particular exchange of affection between Jo and Friedrich. Consequently, the 1994 opera scene in *Little Women* is related much more to the romantic comedy opera scene narratives than either to the novel it is based upon or its preceding film adaptations.

¹⁰ Citron, "An Honest Contrivance," 56-57.

¹¹ Citron, "An Honest Contrivance," 78.

¹² Citron lists 12 cues because she skips the short second cue (when Ronny opens the door of the basement for Loretta) and counts the two parts of the Musetta waltz arrangement only as one cue. See Citron, "An Honest Contrivance," 64.

¹³ Lately there has been an intensive debate about the distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic music in film, see for example Robynn Stilwell, "The Fantastic Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of Califor-

Dick Hyman. Another three cues go to the diegetic music played in the Italian restaurant visited by Loretta and Johnny in the beginning and later on by Rose. Four cues come from the stereo in Rose and Cosmo's house (three times it is the Vicky Carr song "It Must be Him", once Loretta turns on the radio with a saxophone tune). A funky pop song is heard when Loretta is parking her car, an instrumental jazz arrangement of the song "Moonglow" in the bar after their visit to the opera. Finally two cues with Dean Martin's song "That's Amore" frame the film at the beginning and the end. Of particular interest here is Dick Hyman's nondiegetically composed film music. It consists of five musical motifs, which all have a strong ethnic Italian character (using mandolin and accordion, folk-like melodies, harmonies, and rhythms). Two of them are only used twice: the one in triple meter when the grandfather is walking his dogs and the mandolin dominated minor tune when Johnny calls from Sicily. Another very lively musical theme is used five times, mainly associated with Loretta's and Johnny's relationship. It appears first after Johnny proposes to Loretta, twice when Loretta is walking the streets and twice when Johnny is back from Sicily. One motif has a less ethnical character and is used only once when Rose leaves the restaurant with the professor. All these musical motifs have a distinct leitmotivic significance and they are not associated with the love story between Loretta and Ronny. There is, however, one motif that is not so easily connected to a particular storyline and is, moreover, used in different arrangements. It is first arranged for mandolin and guitar when Loretta gets a rose from one of her employers (DVD, 00.04.02), then appears in a march-like rhythm with piano and mandolin while Cosmo and Mona are driving the car (DVD, 00.34.42) and is finally again slower and softer, now with accordion and clarinet and also repeated, when Ronny proposes to Loretta (DVD, 01.32.35). There is not a single cue composed by Dick Hyman that could be associated with a symphonic film score typical for romantic comedy. In particular, there is no musical leitmotif for Loretta or Ronny and their love for each other. These soundtrack cues are completely occupied by *La bohème* excerpts: Ronny's sentimental speech in the basement, Loretta and Ronny ending up in bed together, Ronny persuading her to stay with him after the opera performance, Ronny listening to the gramophone the next morning and Loretta walking home.

This extraordinary use of the operatic music is even more striking when compared to the other two films. The soundtrack of *Pretty Woman* consists of 32 musical cues. 14 cues use pre-existing pop songs, seven of them come from diegetic sources (music from the Blue Banana bar, in the street, in stores, Vivian singing in the bathtub, etc), the other seven include prominent hits such as Go West's "King of Wishful Thinking", a cover version of Johnny O'Keefe's "Wild One", the "title song", Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman" or Roxette's "It Must Have Been Love". There are three purely instrumental cues arranged as pop-tunes, one of them used diegetically when Vivian turns on the stereo,

nia Press, 2007), 184–202; Jeff Smith, "Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music," *Music and the Moving Image* 2/1 (2009): 1–25; David Neumeyer, "Diegetic/Nondiegetic. A Theoretical Model," *Music and the Moving Image* 2/1 (2009): 26–39; Giorgio Biancorosso, "The Harpist in the Closet: Film Music as Epistemological Joke," *Music and the Moving Image* 2/3 (2009): 11–33. In this article I use the "traditional" distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic. Concerning the opera scene, I mostly distinguish between music that is directly related to the particular performance in the opera house and music from the operas that is used in other scenes, either diegetic (e.g. when its source is the gramophone) or nondiegetic.

waiting for Edward. Other diegetic music includes Vivaldi's *Le quattro stagioni* during the dinner in a restaurant, two brass band cues during the polo game, Edward's piano playing, and the opera scene. James Newton Howard composed nine cues of original symphonic film music, mostly dominated by piano, strings and woodwinds and having a rather slow tempo. While four of them have a specifically singular musical motif, the other five share two main motifs and are written in the same key (G major). These five musical cues accompany the key scenes between Edward and Vivian:

cue 8	00.30.16-00.30.45	motif 1	Edward returns from bathroom and finds Vivian sleeping
cue 21	01.20.39-01.22.35	motif 1 and 2	Edward and Vivian in bed, Vivian talks about her past
cue 26	01.34.06-01.36.55	motif 1 and 2	Vivian returns from bathroom and finds Edward sleeping, starts to kiss him, he wakes up and they continue
cue 28	01.52.12-01.53.53	motif 2	Edward asks Vivian to stay the night
cue 30	01.56.50-01.57.48	motif 1	Vivian says farewell to Kit

Motif 2 was inspired by the piano introduction of Bruce Springsteen's song "Racing in the Street" (1978) that originated in the opening bars of The Crystals' song "Then He Kissed Me" (1963). Several musicians covered this song, including Springsteen himself. The associations to "Racing in the Street" (leaving a small town to find a new and better life) and "Then He Kissed Me" (the experience of a first kiss and the feelings it evokes) work well for the narrative of the film, as motif 2 is used in cue 26 when Vivian talks about her past and how she arrived in Los Angeles and in cue 28 when Vivian kisses Edward for the first time. With or without understanding these intertextual references Howard's score supports the emotional bonding between Vivian and Edward by establishing these two leitmotifs according to the film narrative.

It astonishes all the more that at the very end of the film, when Vivian and Edward finally connect, the music of *La traviata* is used again. The musical narrative of the film so far would rather seem to have suggested the use of either one of the two above-mentioned leitmotifs or a reference to the scene where Vivian tells Edward about her childhood dream of a prince who rescues her (cue 27, DVD 01.38.06-01.38.59). The filmmakers however, decided to use the second act of *La traviata* again (DVD 01.59.40-02.01.23). Vivian gets her fairy-tale ending when Edward arrives at her house in his limousine, underscored by the music of Violetta Valery's emotional outburst "Amami Alfredo" already heard during the opera scene. There is a rather blatant ignorance of intertextual references when Violetta sings "Addio" (Farewell) exactly at the moment when Edward starts climbing the fire ladder. Immediately, after this "Addio" Verdi's score is altered, not presenting the music of Violetta's rushing off, but repeating the whole passage of "Amami Alfredo" in a full orchestral version which is reduced in volume with the last short dialogue passage, followed by a transition into a newly composed cadenza when Vivian and Edward finally kiss.

From the viewpoint of intertextual references the use of this farewell scene from *La traviata* for the scene of final unification in the film obviously does not work very well. But what is more important than intertextual meaning in this scene is the effect it has particularly when considering James Newton Howard's "re-writing". Because Violetta's rushing out is cut off twice the music focuses on her emotional outburst and her declaration of love. Repeating the cantilena in a full non-vocal orchestral version turns it into symphonic film music dissociated from the opera narrative.¹⁴ The opera music here also works as a signifier for the fairy-tale character of this happy ending. Opera is a place where such fairy-tales are usually told and the happy ending first becomes operatic by using opera music and then tries step-wise to dissociate from opera again: first by removing the voice, then by blending into newly composed symphonic film music, and finally by bringing the title-song "Pretty Woman" again. Thus the larger framework for the use of *La traviata* at the very end of *Pretty Woman* is to create an extraordinary emotional situation both by repeating music that caused a strong emotional reaction in the opera scene before¹⁵ and by altering the score in a way that focuses on that part of the music that represents love rather than farewell and that supports the overwhelming musical effect of Verdi's setting. Neither Howard's rather intimate leitmotifs used for Vivian and Edward throughout the film, nor the rather descriptive music of Vivian's childhood fairy-tale story would have had that effect.

In contrast to *Moonstruck* and *Pretty Woman* the film makers of *Little Women* decided not to use any music from the opera scene in the soundtrack of the rest of the film. The *Little Women* soundtrack consists of 53 musical cues.¹⁶ 13 of these cues use music diegetically (Beth or Lawry playing the piano, the family singing Christmas carols, dance music at the ball, Friedrich playing the violin); all other cues are symphonic film music composed by Thomas Newman. There are several leitmotifs used throughout these 40 cues that are associated with particular characters or situations, the most prominent being an oboe theme associated with Jo (and particularly her being a writer). Most of the cues support the transition between the dialogues (fading in at the end of one dialogue and fading out at the beginning of the next). As *Little Women* follows the stories of four sisters and the storyline switches between the different lives of the sisters, the music often works as an agent to smoothen out the transition or create a particular mood for a new situation. Within the film narrative the story between Jo and Friedrich is only one storyline among others and in this sense their romance strongly differs from that between Loretta and Ronny or Vivian and Edward. This is directly reflected in the soundtrack that does not provide any particular music associated with the two of them as a couple. At Jo and Friedrich's final meeting at the end of the film, the last cue starts shortly before they kiss with a series of chords that soon progress into the final phrase

¹⁴ Michal Grover-Friedlander has argued that the operatic voice is essential for opera's aesthetic identity in film. See Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions. The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3–4.

¹⁵ Here the film makers use the "affective memory" of the audience: any emotional labeling of a scene caused by the interaction of visual and aural spheres can be reproduced through the affective memory of the audience when using the same music again. See, for example, Claudia Bullerjahn, *Grundlagen der Wirkung von Filmmusik* (Augsburg: Wissner, 2001), 215.

¹⁶ Interestingly the film with the longest running time (*Pretty Woman* with more than 120 min) has the smallest number of musical cues.

of the film's main musical theme¹⁷ and then presents other music from the opening credits, visually transgressing into the final credits.

That Bizet's opera was not used in any other scene of *Little Women* might not only be a practical consequence of the production process¹⁸ but also have a particular meaning concerning the essential effect of opera in romance. *Little Women* is the only film that could have incorporated a 19th century opera as period music. Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* was first performed in 1863, which fits historically very well with *Little Women* played during the American Civil War. However, to use the opera diegetically would have probably caused an audible conflict with Thomas Newman's score whose purpose was to musically create a period atmosphere but not distract from the dialogue.¹⁹ This leads directly to the final question of this article: how to situate an attendance at the opera and the use of opera music in romance and romantic comedy within the larger framework of musical genre conventions.

The opera attendance and musical genre conventions

It is difficult to generalize genre conventions of soundtracks for romance/romantic comedy as it heavily depends on the particular setting of the plot and the atmosphere the filmmakers wish to create. It is also necessary to differentiate between romantic comedies of the late 1980s and 1990s and historical settings as represented by *Little Women* because the genres offer completely different alternatives for a film soundscape. Romantic comedies usually make extensive use of 20th century popular songs.²⁰ The soundtrack for one of the most popular romantic comedies in the late 1980s *When Harry met Sally* (1989) consists of mostly popular songs and jazz standards from the 1920s and the 1930s. These songs are used in very different arrangements to create the particular atmosphere for the scene, e.g. the title song "It Had to Be You" by Isham Jones arranged for jazz trio appears in the opening credits to establish the light atmosphere of the film, then in a piano arrangement in a slow tempo for the more intimate scenes between Harry and Sally and finally sung by Frank Sinatra in the film's showdown where Harry runs back to Sally. Rather than creating such a unified soundscape, a more general convention in romantic comedy is to provide popular songs to create a general tone or mood in the film and to use symphonic film music in the underscore to accompany particular emotional situations or to illustrate specific actions. A typical example is *Sleepless in Seattle* (1994) that is framed by Jimmy Durante songs in the opening and closing credits, uses mostly

¹⁷ I would describe the second theme of the opening credits as the "main theme" of the film because it has a very prominent position in the opening and closing credits as well as in other cues of the film (e.g. the extended cue when Jo arrives in New York) but is not particularly associated with a character or situation.

¹⁸ Director Gillian Armstrong explains in the audio commentary that the kiss between Jo and Friedrich would originally have been in a later scene on the steps of the house, and then was rewritten for the scene in the opera house due to financial reasons.

¹⁹ Armstrong mentions this purpose in the audio commentary (DVD, 01.16.03).

²⁰ Though several publications about popular music in film evidence a growing interest in this topic, romantic comedy is hardly ever more than merely mentioned in this context. See, for example, Wojcik, Pamela R. and Knight, Arthur, ed. *Soundtrack available. Essays on Film and Popular Music*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001; Inglis, Ian, ed. *Popular Music and Film*. London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003. In general, film music studies or histories show a tendency to neglect romantic comedy.

slow paced popular songs throughout the film to create a sentimental mood and turns to symphonic film music (dominated mostly by piano and strings) when the “magic of love” leads Annie to Sam, giving rise to a full orchestra finale when they finally meet at the top of the Empire State Building.

Opera music is hardly ever used in romantic comedies because it does not fit well as a soundscape for the love stories of ordinary people. There are quite a few insignificant examples, e.g. an instrumental version of the aria “Un bel di vedremo” (Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*) as background music in an antique shop in *One Fine Day* (1996)²¹ or an excerpt from Puccini’s *Tosca* used as background music in a bar in *40 Days and 40 Nights* (2002). In addition, there are a few examples that use Italian opera to create the ethnographic background for Italy, e.g. the drinking song from *La traviata* used for some picture postcard shots of Rome in Norman Jewison’s *Only You* (1994).²² When classical music in general appears in a more significant position in romantic comedy it evolves an explicitly elitist and high cultural character. A typical example is *Green Card* (1990), where a clarinet concerto and a flute concerto by Mozart accompany scenes in Brontë’s garden house. This music choice is integrated into a whole cosmos of contrasts in this film that places Brontë, the garden house, refinement, recreation, education, upper class, vegetarian food and classical music on one side and George, the streets, rudeness, hecticness, lack of education, lower class, meat and “African”²³ music on the other side. The cliché of classical music and particularly opera as being an elitist art also provides the basic narrative of the opera scenes in *Moonstruck* and *Pretty Woman*. However, exactly because these clichés are played through by going to the opera and explicitly naming them they can also be transgressed, both in the opera scene as well as in the use of opera music beyond an attendance at the opera. In contrast to other film genres that show a visit to the opera as an elite social ritual (e.g. *Matchpoint*, *The Age of Innocence*, *The House of Mirth*) romantic comedy explicitly focuses on the main protagonists and their emotions as soon as the performance has started; the audience, the clothes and the manners not being important anymore. Moreover, opera music can occupy very different and the most atypical places against the background of typical genre conventions of romantic comedy. It represents Ronny and the love between Ronny and Loretta in *Moonstruck* and is integrated into this film score in several arrangements and musically elaborated selections. In *Pretty Woman* the opera music emphasizes the fairytale character of the happy ending, occupying a place where usually voluminous symphonic film music or a foregrounded song can be heard.

²¹ It is, however, certainly no coincidence that “Un bel di vedremo” was chosen here, as the title song “One fine day” for the film *One fine day* was inspired by Puccini’s aria, which directly translates as “One fine day we will see”.

²² It is interesting that Jewison uses opera in *Only you* in a completely different way from *Moonstruck*; in the first case only illustrating Italian sights with it, in the second case using it as a signifier for his main protagonists and their love for each other. Prizzi’s Honor (1985) also uses Italian opera throughout the film to create the American-Italian ethnic background. This film, however, is more of a black comedy than a typical romantic comedy. For an analysis see Mary Hunter, “Opera in Film. Sentiment Wit, Feeling and Knowing: *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Prizzi’s Honor*,” in *Between Opera and Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose M. Theresa (New York: Routledge, 2002), 93–120.

²³ Hans Zimmer creates percussion dominated symphonic film music to represent George’s fictive residence in Africa. French music (e.g. the chanson) is significantly not used to accompany George who should not represent a “cultivated” France that is usually associated with this kind of music.

These new possibilities offered in *Moonstruck* and *Pretty Woman* are absent from *Little Women*, though the film obviously follows the emotional narrative of the opera scene in romantic comedy, leading even to a kiss between the protagonists. Genre conventions would have allowed this historical romance to integrate opera music as period music into its soundtrack much more easily. There are also other prominent examples of literature based 19th century romances where opera music works as an important signifier for the protagonists' desire, e.g. Puccini's "Il mio babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi* and "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta" from *La Rondine* in *A Room With a View* (1985). Yet, particularly because opera music fits as period music in *Little Women* it could not have the utopian potential it has in romantic comedy when used both in an opera scene and in the soundtrack. Marc Weiner answered the question "Why Does Hollywood like Opera?" with the suggestion that as a "space for the expression of fantasy" opera "appears to transcend the particularity of given social conventions".²⁴ One might modify this statement for romantic comedy: to transcend its elitist character opera needs to be physically experienced in an opera attendance that has a particular narrative. In the emotional space opened up by this narrative opera music can become a romantic soundtrack.

POVZETEK

Članek preučuje romantične komedije in romance, katerih zgodba vključuje prizore, v katerih vodilni igralci obišejo operno predstavo. Analiza obiskov opernih predstav *Moonstruck* (1987), *Pretty Woman* (1990) in *Little Women* (1994) kaže, da so si začetne okoliščine za obisk operne predstave v vseh filmih precej podobne, vendar pa se povednost opernih prizorov in uporaba operne glasbe v filmih občutno razlikuje: *Moonstruck* glasbeno povezuje ljubezensko zgodbo Lorette in

Ronnieja z opero skozi celoten film; *Pretty Woman* z opero poudari pravljичni konec; *Little Women* pa operne glasbe sploh ne uporabi, razen v prizoru z ogledom predstave. Širša razprava o zvočnem filmskem traku romantičnih komedij in romancah razkriva ozadje opere, ki ima običajno velik pomen za elitno umetnost, vendar pa ne deluje dobro v glasbenem okolju ljubezenskih zgodb običajnih ljudi. S poigravanjem s temi klišeji ob obisku operne predstave lahko gre romantična komedija prek teh stereotipov, operna glasba pa lahko postane podlaga za filme.

²⁴ Marc Weiner, "Why Does Hollywood like Opera," in *Between Opera and Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose M. Theresa (New York: Routledge, 2002), 79–81.