

The Film Music of

Edmund Meisel

(1894–1930)

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the film scores of Edmund Meisel (1894–1930), composed in Berlin and London during the period 1926–1930. In the main, these scores were written for feature-length films, some for live performance with silent films and some recorded for post-synchronized sound films. The genesis and contemporaneous reception of each score is discussed within a broadly chronological framework. Meisel's scores are evaluated largely outside their normal left-wing proletarian and avant-garde backgrounds, drawing comparisons instead with narrative scoring techniques found in mainstream commercial practices in Hollywood during the early sound era. The narrative scoring techniques in Meisel's scores are demonstrated through analyses of his extant scores and soundtracks, in conjunction with a review of surviving documentation and modern reconstructions where available.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ARTE	Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne (Franco-German TV network)
BFI	British Film Institute, London
BIFD	British International Film Distributors
BTP	British Talking Pictures
FEKS	Factory of the Eccentric Actor
IAH	Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (the International Workers' Aid)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschland
MGG	<i>Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> (Finscher 2001)
MOMA	Museum of Modern Art, New York
RCA	Radio Corporation of America
RGALI	Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow
SWR	Südwestrundfunk (German public-service broadcasting corporation)
Ufa	Universum Film AG
ZDF	Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (German public-service television broadcaster)

Notes

- Film titles are given in full on their first occurrence but are abbreviated thereafter where possible. Where necessary, distinction is made between releases of the same film in different countries under different titles.
- Screening times of silent films have been estimated using the Film Measurement Tables in Cherchi Usai (2000: 170–4).
- Specific references to pages from Meisel’s extant piano scores are prefixed by the abbreviation PS, to distinguish these from page references to literature.
- Meisel’s extant piano scores are riddled with errors and inconsistencies. Where extracts have been reproduced, the most obvious errors have been amended without further comment.
- The author-date system is used to acknowledge the majority of citations. Dates for newspaper articles are rendered in the expanded format of year-month-day where possible. Similarly, some journal articles from the 1920s and 1930s (for example from *Close Up*) are rendered in the format year-month. This enables greater chronological accuracy in the bibliography when listing multiple articles occurring within a narrow timeframe, many of which are anonymous.
- Footnotes are used for additional clarification where necessary, but these have been kept to the bare minimum.
- All translations from the German originals are my own unless otherwise stated.
- Author pseudonyms have been included in the bibliography where known.
- Full details of archival sources pertaining to Meisel’s time in England are collated in Appendix V. This lists items from the BFI collections for the Film Society, Ivor Montagu and James Anderson, together with documents housed in Oswald Blakeston’s papers at the University of Texas. Within the thesis, the reference numbers for these documents are prefaced by the abbreviations FS, IM, JA and OB respectively.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the original silent-film scores and early sound-film scores of Edmund Meisel, composed in Berlin and London during the brief period 1926–30. The majority of his scores were written for feature-length films, the exceptions being a short advertising film and a cartoon, and had premiere performances in one of Berlin's film palaces. Rick Altman in *Silent Film Sound* (2004), his seminal study of the heterogeneous accompaniment practices in American silent film, has comprehensively shattered previously held assumptions about silent-film sound. The two major assumptions were that silent film constituted a single homogeneous period, and that prestigious feature films shown in picture palaces with orchestral accompaniment during the 1920s were representative of practices generally throughout the whole silent period. Studying only the affluent end of the market in the 1920s supposedly 'skews our understanding of film music' (Altman 2004: 10), because it ignores the wider context of the whole programme (variety acts, newsreels, cartoons, cultural and educational films, etc.) and the plethora of sonic practices taking place just around the corner in smaller venues and beyond in the provinces. However, studying 'picture palace' music does not skew our understanding of feature-film music as it developed in the sound era, since it was precisely the practice of customized orchestral accompaniments that was carried over into sound film.

Altman also challenges the assumption that 'silent film music practice was simply directly borrowed from nineteenth-century stage music practices' (Altman 2004: 10), chiefly melodrama. This assumption has arisen for several valid reasons, namely that many film musicians had a background in music for the stage; that some practices relating to the creation of sound-effects in silent-film accompaniments had stage precedents; and that the meagre surviving sources for melodrama accompaniments suggest similarities of purpose with the published silent-film

repertory music used for compiled accompaniments. As Altman has pointed out, there is insufficient evidence to corroborate these connections without making ‘scattershot references’ to examples of stage-music practice ‘drawn indifferently from multiple countries and all ten decades of the [nineteenth] century’ (Altman 2004: 10). Unsurprisingly, there have been few attempts in film-music literature to prove our assumptions regarding the cross-fertilization between stage and screen. A rare exception is an article by David Neumeyer (1995), showing how Max Steiner, an ex-Broadway composer, drew on the traditions of Viennese melodrama when underscoring dialogue in *The Informer* (dir. John Ford, 1935). Neumeyer makes compelling connections between the grave-digging scene in Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, examples from early twentieth-century operettas by Romberg and Friml, and Steiner’s scoring practice. Meisel began his composing career writing incidental music for the left-wing agitprop director Erwin Piscator, initially for political revues and then for his stage productions. He was more prolific as a composer of incidental music than as a film composer, but, since barely any of his incidental music is known to have survived, its influence on his film scores can only be surmised. Nevertheless, it seems entirely justifiable to highlight gestures common to the film music of Meisel and his contemporaries which would appear to have theatrical antecedents.

Meisel is normally associated with left-wing ideology, chiefly because of his work for Piscator and Prometheus, the left-wing German film distribution company behind the German releases of several Russian silent films for which Meisel composed scores. This thesis largely ignores these left-wing surroundings and compares Meisel’s approach to film scoring not only with the styles of mainstream film composers active in Berlin at the same time, such as Gottfried Huppertz and Giuseppe Becce (an Italian), but also with the American practice exemplified by Ernő Rapée, since the latter was working in Berlin at precisely the time Meisel first published his ideas about film accompaniments and composed his most famous score for *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin* (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1925; German release 1926).

This stance is similar to that recommended by the German film scholar Thomas Elsaesser, who has emphasized the negative and stifling effect the retrospective teleology that two seminal works – Siegfried Kracauer’s *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947) and Lotte Eisner’s *The Haunted Screen* (1969) – have had on our view of German film in its first decades. Elsaesser has pleaded for a re-evaluation of German early silent cinema (the first two decades in his case), one which focuses on ‘a cinema that was normal, in the sense of ordinary and widely available, and . . . [which] can only be understood within a comparative approach, . . . establishing what might have been the “norm” or “norms” of film style, of film production and film reception’ (Elsaesser 1996a: 12). Applying this ‘normalization’ will allow Meisel’s scores to be compared against mainstream commercial developments in silent-film music in the late 1920s and during the transition to sound. Once film accompaniments became standardized through sound film, the obvious benchmark for comparison is the classical narrative scoring found in American feature films during Hollywood’s ‘Golden Age’. Meisel’s style is duly compared at times to the scores of Steiner and Erich Korngold, composed in the two decades after Meisel’s death. Another tag often attached to Meisel is ‘avant-garde’, chiefly because of the pulsating, dissonant ‘noise-music’ in his scores for Eisenstein and Ruttmann. The extent to which Meisel was in the vanguard of film music is also assessed.

Until now, there has only been one short survey of Meisel’s film music, made by the German film historian Werner Sudendorf (1984). This thesis is the first comprehensive account of Meisel’s film music written in the English language, encompassing all his film work known to date and set against the little that is known of his incidental music for Piscator and other stage directors. The content and style of Meisel’s scores is examined, incorporating existing analyses where applicable. In cases where no score or soundtrack is extant, more reliance is placed on contemporaneous press releases and reviews. Sudendorf’s research was hampered by a lack of resources for Meisel’s sound films, but he still concluded that ‘Meisel was

one of the few film musicians and one of the few film-making artists in Germany generally who favoured sound film from the beginning' (Sudendorf 1984: 29). More than two decades later, it is now possible to corroborate Sudendorf's statement more fully through a detailed survey of Meisel's sound-film work from mid-1928 onwards. Much of his stay in London during 1929 is traced through an examination of contemporaneous press reports and relevant documents pertaining to the Film Society and Ivor Montagu. This thesis includes a more thorough examination of the surviving documentary evidence, unearthing many details about Meisel's first feature-length sound film, *The Crimson Circle* (*Der rote Kreis*, dir. Friedrich Zelnik, 1928; English sound release 1929), and the unrealized post-synchronization of *The General Line* (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1929). In addition, some German sound-film artefacts from 1928 and 1930 have come to light during the genesis of this thesis: sound effects recorded onto gramophone discs; a set of sound discs to the post-synchronized version of *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin* (Germany 1930); and a sound-on-film print of *Der blaue Expreß* (dir. Ilya Trauberg, 1928; German release 1930), as edited for the French market by Abel Gance under the title *Le Train mongol* (1931). There are therefore now many more texts and artefacts to study than were at Sudendorf's disposal, creating many new fruitful areas for critical engagement.

Meisel's surviving scores for silent films have undergone various reconstructions since the 1970s, resulting in numerous live performances, recordings and broadcasts. Selected reconstructions are incorporated within the discussion and are also collated in Appendix I. As with the reconstructions of other silent-film scores, Meisel's music has had to be extended and re-arranged to fit surviving or restored film prints, which may differ in length, order and content from the prints encountered by the composer. Occasionally, information in Meisel's scores has been used as a guide to the scene order in a restored film print, but most decisions tend to inflict changes on the score rather than the other way round. This is the pragmatic approach: missing footage cannot easily be generated to fit the length of the music at

any given point without resorting to meaningless repetition. These reconstructions have to be regarded with a degree of caution, since budgetary restrictions, changing tastes and notions regarding the relative importance of ‘authenticity’ have a direct impact on the size and constitution of the ensemble employed, the style of orchestration and the spotting of sound effects (in terms of style and frequency). The audio-visual correlations can also be at variance with the composer’s original intentions. Nonetheless, these reconstructions are invaluable for evaluating Meisel’s importance in the history of film music and sound design.

The first part of this thesis discusses three contextual strands: a short bibliographical survey, Meisel’s first articles on film scoring and how his theoretical ideas related to mainstream film-music practices during the Weimar period, and an overview of Meisel’s incidental music for the stage. The remaining four parts provide a broadly chronological survey of Meisel’s film music.

Part One

Contexts

1 A Bibliographical Survey

This bibliographical survey is divided into five sections, starting with an examination of the scant biographical information for the composer and a discussion of Meisel's letters to Eisenstein, his articles and which newspapers typically reported on his work. Until the mid-1980s, Meisel's posthumous reputation had been chiefly based on a handful of brief comments, all published within the first few decades after his death by contemporaneous German critics (notably Ernest J. Borneman, Kurt London and Hanns Eisler) and Eisenstein. These are addressed in the third and fourth sections of the survey. The other directors of films for which Meisel composed scores do not appear to have written anything substantial about the composer. The final section surveys core film-music texts and highlights how the earlier formative critiques have been propagated and often misinterpreted.

Biographical data

The main published source of biographical information is Meisel's entry in the first edition of the *Deutsches Musiker-Lexikon* (Müller 1929: 910–11), a practical directory of all living musicians, native and non-native, contemporaneously active in the musical life of Germany. This source does not always appear to be accurate or complete; fortunately, Sudendorf was able to provide supplementary information from Meisel's living relatives. Meisel was born in Vienna in 1894, the son of a pastry chef (father) and a pianist (mother). He moved to Berlin with his family about ten years later (Sudendorf 1984: 5). Like so many artists working in the cultural milieu of Berlin and film in particular, Meisel was of Jewish descent and has been described as '[o]ne of the most famous, and controversial, of Jewish suppliers of music for the "silent" cinema' (Prawer 2005). Meisel disguised his Jewish origins to some extent

when advertising himself, listing his father's first name, Abraham, as Adolf in Müller's directory (Sudendorf 1984: 5; Müller 1929: 910).

Little is known about Meisel's musical training. He studied at the private John Petersen Music School in Berlin, where his teachers were Petersen (violin), Birger Hammer (piano), Robert Klein and Paul Ertel (composition, counterpoint and music history). Meisel's formal musical education appears to have been completed by the time he reached the age of eighteen, after which he began earning a living as a violinist in the Blüthner and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras (1912–14), before branching out as a conductor of orchestral concerts and operas (1918–26). Whereas the directory entries in Müller for composers such as Paul Dessau and Wolfgang Zeller indicate that they participated in World War I (Müller 1929: 225 and 1623–4), there is no information regarding Meisel's whereabouts in the period 1914–18. Sudendorf also cast doubt on the extent of Meisel's conducting career after the war; despite extensive research through contemporaneous press reports, he found only a handful of public events where Meisel was listed as the conductor (Sudendorf 1984: 6 and 90).

Meisel's progression from violinist to conductor appears not to have been a success and he was probably still financially dependent on casual employment as a violinist during this period. Although Meisel's conducting style was technically satisfactory, he lacked any individual creative spark to differentiate him from the rest, forcing him to decide whether to persist as a concert conductor and be 'one among many, or to become one among few in another field' (Sudendorf 1984: 7). That new field was to be the political theatre of Piscator: a radical break from the world of classical concert music. With the possible exception of Eisenstein, Piscator was to prove the biggest influence on Meisel's artistic development. An overview of his work for Piscator is provided in Chapter 3.

Letters, articles and press reports

Meisel and Eisenstein supposedly corresponded since their *Potemkin* collaboration in April 1926 (*Film-Kurier* 1928-03-24), but all that survives of their correspondence are some letters from Meisel to Eisenstein spanning the period November 1927 to October 1929. There are also some pertinent letters written to Eisenstein by the managing directors of Prometheus regarding the German releases of *Potemkin* and *October* (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1928). These letters to Eisenstein from Meisel and Prometheus have been collated in Appendix III, together with details of where they have been published. The surviving correspondence from Meisel begins with the composer informing Eisenstein of his imminent trip to Moscow (see Chapter 8) and continues until Eisenstein arrived in London. The letters provide invaluable information regarding Meisel's work on his score for *October*, his exasperation with the Prometheus management, his exploits in England, and constant questions to Eisenstein concerning the state of *The General Line*, which he hoped to post-synchronize in London.

Meisel addresses the director quite formally in the first letter as 'Herr Eisenstein', but the remainder are increasingly personal, the composer having enjoyed cordial relations with Eisenstein during his two visits to Moscow. The majority of Meisel's letters (those up to and including 5 April 1929) have been published by Sudendorf (1984: 75–88), the remainder by Bulgakowa (1998: 85–90). Sudendorf described the letters, with one noted exception, as having originally been typed with corrections made by hand, some of which were illegible (Sudendorf 1984: 75). The letters are not reproduced in facsimile form; in all cases they have been re-typed, including any handwritten signatures. The signatories are inconsistent, being either Meisel alone or including his wife Els: 'Edmund und Els Meisel', 'Els und Edmund Meisel', or 'Ihre Meisels'. It is possible that Els may have partially composed some of these letters, particularly those signed 'Els und Edmund Meisel' and written after

their first visit to Moscow in November 1927. The more gushing prose style needs to be viewed in light of her alleged affair with Eisenstein (Taylor 1995: 546).

There are six extant letters which Meisel sent to Eisenstein from London, but Sudendorf only published the first two. The remainder wholly concerned *The General Line* and Sudendorf considered them to be ‘of no importance to the artistic development of Meisel’ (Sudendorf 1984: 75). These have since been published by Bulgakowa (1998: 85–90). The post-synchronization of *The General Line*, if it had materialized, ‘might have changed the terrain of subsequent cinema, music and sound arts’ (Kahn 1992) and further enhanced Meisel’s prominence in the history of sound film and sound design. The extant documentation demonstrates that the aborted project was of importance to Meisel’s artistic development, foreshadowing many of the techniques he would use in his post-synchronization of *Potemkin* in 1930, and is discussed in Chapter 10.

Meisel was always keen to promote his work and ideas, writing many articles and giving copious interviews to the Berlin press and, during his extended stay in London in 1929, to the British press (see Chapter 10). His earliest articles were written before his work on *Potemkin* and made suggestions for the ideal film score. After *Potemkin*, his articles usually appeared in conjunction with the premiere of his current film or stage production. Typically, he would promote his new film scores by publishing some thematic extracts and advertising his latest novel approach. His articles are generally enthusiastic in tone, with his latest work being hailed as his best venture to date. From August 1928 onwards, after he had made his first sound film (see Chapter 9), his articles are almost exclusively on the topic of sound film and his enthusiasm for its artistic potential. Most of his articles were published in the daily *Film-Kurier*, one of Germany’s most influential film papers. Meisel also published two articles on the topic of his sound-film work in *Melos*, a Berlin journal which promoted modern music and its role in society.

As in the contemporaneous British and American film press, discussion of musical accompaniments in the German press was often consigned to occasional supplements. The Berlin *Film-Kurier* and its supplement *Die Film-Musik* are particularly fertile sources, since Meisel's friendship with the editor Hans Feld (which began in 1927) guaranteed regular reporting of his latest film music endeavours at home and abroad (Feld 1984: 37). Reports of Meisel's work and critiques of his scores (often just perfunctory comments tacked on to the end of a film review) can also be found in film papers such as *Der Film*, *Lichtbild-Bühne* and *Reichsfilmblatt*, and in leading Berlin daily newspapers. More extensive critiques can be found in the monthly *Film-Ton-Kunst* which dealt exclusively with the musical illustration of films, having been founded by Becce specifically for that purpose.

Meisel's exploits in England with the Film Society and sound-film work can be traced in *Bioscope*, *Cinema News and Property Gazette*, *Kinematograph Weekly* and *Film Weekly*. His friendships with Oswald Blakeston and Robert Herring also led to regular reports in *Close Up* and the *Manchester Guardian*. The Ivor Montagu and Film Society Collections at the BFI proved to be invaluable documentary sources for the performances of Meisel's scores at the Film Society and the unrealized post-synchronization of *The General Line*.

Formative critiques by German contemporaries

Borneman published an article in *Sight and Sound* in 1934, describing sound-montage experiments made by Meisel at the German Film Research Institute in Berlin, their purpose to determine whether certain famous silent films were edited according to musical principles:

Meisel analysed the montage of some famous silent films in regard to rhythm, emphasis, emotional climax, and mood. To each separate shot he assigned a certain musical theme. Then he directly combined the separate themes, using the rhythm, emphasis, and climaxes of the visual montage for the organisation of his

music. He wished to prove by this experiment that the montage of a good film is based on the same rules and develops in the same way as music. The result of this experiment was that some so-called 'good' films did not in any way produce music, but merely a chaos of various themes, unordered and unorganised. Others of the films which he chose, however, resulted in a kind of strange rhapsody, unaccustomed and extraordinary to the ear, but nevertheless not without a certain musical continuity. By far the best result was from Eisenstein's *Potemkin*. (Borneman 1934: 65)

If Borneman is the same Berlin writer Ernst Julius Wilhelm Bornemann, who fled to England in 1933 and later made a career in various fields ranging from crime writing to sexology, then he was only fifteen at the time of Meisel's death in 1930. His information is therefore at best secondhand and, given the lack of a specific timeframe, of questionable value. It is most likely that the experiments, if they took place, were done post-*October* (that is, from mid-1928 onwards) once Meisel began his true sound-film work. Borneman's description of Meisel as 'the composer of the musical scores for *Potemkin* and *October*' corroborates this.

The most influential critique of Meisel has undoubtedly been that in London's *Film Music* (1936), one of the earliest surveys of film music:

[Meisel's] expressionistic style, turning first and foremost on rhythm, was many stages in advance of the films for which he composed. His musical accompaniment for the Russian film *Battleship Potemkin* marked him out as a pioneer in film music. The film made a deep impression wherever it was shown, but there is no doubt that this impression was to no small extent enhanced by the music. It is significant that several European countries which allowed the film itself to pass the censor forbade the music to be played. Its really provocative rhythm was liable to lash the revolutionary instincts latent in audiences to boiling-point . . . The rhythms which mark the departure of the mutinous ship, as the engines begin to move, have become famous, and have since been imitated countless times. (London 1936: 93)

A second, condemnatory, passage followed, which describes Meisel as a one-hit wonder (*Potemkin*) and proposed that he would not have fared well after the transition to sound films, had he lived long enough:

After [*Potemkin*], he wasted his energy in useless musical experiments. *Berlin*¹, for instance, Ruttmann's documentary film, he ruined with his harsh atonalities. Later, shortly before the end of his brief career, he became a little more moderate . . . And his first attempts in sound-films, after which death overtook him, showed that he died with the silent film, in a kind of common destiny: apparently it was only with difficulty and reluctance that he managed to submit to the laws of the sound-film. Yet he remains as one of the strongest influences in film music. (London 1936: 93–4)

This description, however historically convenient, does not stand up to close scrutiny, as an examination of Meisel's work in sound film demonstrates. Eisenstein included most of London's critique in an unpublished essay on rhythm from 1938 (translated in Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 227–48). This gave London's opinion more authority than it deserved. Eisenstein also conveniently ignored London's statement that Meisel's style was 'many stages in advance of the films for which he composed', which included the director's own films *Potemkin* and *October*. Instead, Eisenstein posed the question 'Why was his "Expressionist style, with its stress on rhythm . . . far ahead" of all the other films but not *Potemkin*?' (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 237). This essay is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 8.

There are many points of connection between Meisel and Eisler: they worked in the same left-wing artistic circles with Piscator and Bertolt Brecht; both wrote scores for films and plays with revolutionary content; and both were involved with Prometheus, Meisel at its inception in 1926 with the meteoric success of *Potemkin* and Eisler at its demise into bankruptcy in 1932 before *Kuhle Wampe* (dir. Slatan Dudow, 1932) was completed (Murray 1990: 218–19). However, whereas Eisler's Marxist beliefs were firmly entrenched, Meisel was more taken with the revolutionary ideas of Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin as they applied to film and film sound than any political ideology. Whilst resident in London (1929), Meisel even played down his former associations with the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschland), sensing the current anti-Bolshevik sentiments in Britain (Miss J. M. Harvey to Meisel, London, 8

¹ *Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (dir. Walther Ruttmann, 1927).

November 1929; FS15.5.33). From Eisler's guarded critique, it is apparent that he regarded Meisel as a lesser composer than himself, yet was jealous of his notoriety:

Meisel was only a modest composer, and his score [to *Potemkin*] is certainly not a masterpiece; however, it was non-commercial at the time it was written, it avoided the neutralizing clichés and preserved a certain striking power, however crude. Nevertheless there is not the slightest indication that its aggressiveness impaired its effectiveness to the public; on the contrary, its effectiveness was enhanced. (Adorno and Eisler 1994 [1947]: 123–4)

Eisenstein on Meisel

Eisenstein regularly re-worked earlier material under new titles in his vast (and generally unfinished) writings. Such re-cycling can be confusing, particularly when compounded by the variety of available English translations. Montagu was the first to translate some of Eisenstein's early essays, which were published in *Close Up*. Subsequently, Jay Leyda and Herbert Marshall, two students who studied with Eisenstein at the Moscow film schools in the 1930s, translated more substantial amounts of Eisenstein's writings into English, chiefly in American publications. Marshall (1978) also produced an important anthology of documents and essays about *Potemkin*, including information regarding the 1926 Berlin premiere and the film's subsequent fate elsewhere in Europe and the USA. Prior to this, such documents had only been available in publications in German (Herlinghaus 1960) and Russian (Kleiman and Levina 1969).

Cutting across and adding to the translations of Leyda and Marshall is the four-volume chronological *S. M. Eisenstein Selected Works* under the general editorship of Richard Taylor (London: BFI, 1988–96). The limited details available about Meisel in this multi-volume source have been marred by an error in the endnotes (repeated in all volumes except the third), which gives Meisel's year of birth as 1874 instead of 1894. This error stems from a German directory of musicians originally published in 1936 (reprinted Frank and Altmann 1971: 388) and was perpetuated in the old Library

of Congress catalogue entry for Meisel (prior to 1999), but the latter has since been rectified. Taylor also described Meisel as a ‘composer for the Deutsches Theater under Max Reinhardt’ (Taylor 1988: 315, fn. 2), rather than Piscator. Taylor’s source for this second error was possibly Herbert Birett’s *Stummfilm-Musik:*

Materialsammlung (1970: 203; cf. Müller 1929: 910), a standard compendium of primary source materials for silent-film music in Germany. Although both errors were corrected in Taylor’s later guide to Eisenstein’s *Potemkin* (2000), the incorrect year of birth has appeared in recent German publications, such as Oksana Bulgakowa’s biography of Eisenstein ([1998]; English translation 2001: 274) and in the ‘Filmmusik’ article for *MGG* (Siebert 2001: 451).

Occasional references to Meisel can be found in Eisenstein biographies; only those written after Eisenstein’s death in 1948 and available in English have been surveyed. There are many discrepancies in these biographies – even in the most recent ones by Ronald Bergan (1999) and Bulgakowa (2001) – regarding the chronology of Eisenstein’s travels through Europe during 1929 en route to America in 1930. The chronology prepared by Sudendorf, Kleiman and Schlegel (1975) has been used for all dates unless otherwise specified, as it appears to be the most reliable, carefully listing source documents and their differences.

There are only a handful of references to Meisel in Eisenstein’s vast output of writings. From these, Meisel emerges at best as a willing servant to the talent of Eisenstein, or at worst as a mere conduit for the director’s early ideas on sound. In the late 1930s, around the time he began work on *Alexander Nevsky* (his first sound film with dialogue), Eisenstein began to recast himself as a sound-film pioneer, citing his collaboration with Meisel for the German release of *Potemkin* as his first experiment in sound film. Extensive quotations from two essays from that period are provided in Chapter 4, one of which includes London’s damning critique of the composer. Eisenstein was merely following London’s lead, having not had the opportunity to experience much of Meisel’s music in performance. When writing his memoirs some

twenty years after he had first encountered Meisel in Berlin, Eisenstein remembered the composer more warmly for his ‘faultless score for *Potemkin* and an entirely appropriate one for *October*’, before relating a series of anecdotes regarding Meisel’s visits to Moscow to work on his *October* score (1927/1928), the Film Society screening of *Potemkin* in London (November 1929), and the cooling of relations between director and composer once Els Meisel revealed her brief affair with Eisenstein (Taylor 1995: 546). The validity of some of these anecdotes prove to be questionable when compared to evidence in Meisel’s scores and surviving documentation.

Core film-music texts

Meisel, described as ‘perhaps the most celebrated of all silent film composers’, dominates the brief appraisal of special scores for silent films in *The Technique of Film Music* by Roger Manvell and John Huntley (1957: 23–4 and 58). This text undoubtedly helped to foster a fascination for Meisel outside Germany, a fascination based largely on the recollections of those in the British film industry who had heard his scores at Film Society performances, since the writers were too young to have experienced the scores themselves. Feld, resident in London since 1935, also played a vital role in nurturing his old friend’s posthumous reputation, as he allowed Manvell and Huntley access to the *Berlin* piano score in his private collection. Their discussion of Meisel’s scores relies on extensive quotations from Borneman and Eisler (discussed above), framing a central section on the extant piano score to *Berlin* (including a facsimile of page 13). Regrettably, Manvell and Huntley introduced some errors, stating that Meisel used his montage analysis as a method to score *Potemkin* and *October* (when the experiments were made post-*October*), and that the sample from the *Berlin* score accompanied ‘scenes of a train entering the suburbs of Berlin in the early morning’, whereas it refers to scenes of empty Berlin streets. The

same sample page re-appeared in a rather negative discussion of Meisel's *Berlin* score by Motte-Haber and Emons (1980: 60–3); see Chapter 7.

Alan Kriegsman, arts critic for the *Washington Post*, wrote an insightful review regarding the first reconstruction of Meisel's *Potemkin* score by Arthur Kleiner (Los Angeles, 1972; discussed in Chapter 4). Kriegsman grasped the importance of Meisel's music, whilst acknowledging its modest musical means:

Its acrid sonorities and dissonant chords may have represented an advance in daring over contemporary idioms of film music, but they are tame by comparison with 'The Rite of Spring', say, which preceded 'Potemkin' by more than a decade . . .

Four-square march patterns abound. Excitement is generated and augmented by the age-old devices of crescendos, accelerating tempos, drum rolls, and tremolos.

What gives Meisel's work its distinction is not the elements he used, but the way in which he has forged them into a unified dramatic structure that not only runs parallel to, but actually redoubles the punch of Eisenstein's film imagery at every instant

What Meisel so brilliantly understood was that the music for 'Potemkin' could not remain a mere background or accessory. It had to become an ingredient of the film itself, one with the rhythms and textures and feelings of the picture. In consequence, the cumulative power of the graphic and tonal mixture is unique. For sheer visceral agitation there is nothing in all film history to rival it, even today, and very little in any other realm of art that comes close.

(Kriegsman 1972-03-24)

The first edition of Roy Prendergast's *Film Music: A Neglected Art* was published in 1977 and was therefore able to incorporate Kleiner's reconstruction of *Potemkin*. Prendergast's discussion (1992: 14–16) has minimal original input, instead relying on extensive quotations from Kriegsman's article, a paraphrase of Borneman (again used anachronistically), and extensive quotation from Eisenstein's *Film Form* (1949: 177–8) regarding the manner in which the *Potemkin* score had been composed (see Chapter 4).

Kathryn Kalinak (1983) wrote one of the earliest academic papers on Meisel's *Potemkin* score, based on Kleiner's reconstruction and the film print held by MOMA,

with extensive reference to Kriegsman's review. Her occasional factual errors regarding the history of *Potemkin* and the fate of Meisel's score are understandable, given the relative lack of Eisenstein scholarship at that time. Kalinak made a commendable attempt at analysing aspects of the audio-visual synthesis and her comments on the Odessa Steps massacre are incorporated within Chapter 4.

Sudendorf's monograph on the composer, *Der Stummfilmmusiker Edmund Meisel*, was published in 1984. Although only a slim paperback volume of just over one hundred pages in length, it is an invaluable and comprehensive compendium. The monograph contains a short biography; reminiscences from Feld; an interview with Kleiner about his reconstructions of *Potemkin* and *Berlin*; an article by David Kershaw on his reconstruction of *October*; various recollections from Meisel's contemporaries; articles by and about Meisel from the 1920s; a selection of letters written to Eisenstein by Meisel and the Prometheus film company; lists of all Meisel's known concert performances (as conductor), incidental music for stage productions, film music, selected published articles, published music (not including his film music) and recordings. The volume is copiously illustrated throughout with photographs, posters, programmes, obituary notices from *Film-Kurier* and extracts from Meisel's piano scores (including the entire last act of *Potemkin*). The editor's research and critical insights deserve wider dissemination, particularly in English texts.

Since Kleiner's pioneering reconstruction of the *Potemkin* score in the 1970s, many more reconstructions of Meisel's scores have been commissioned for live performance with film screenings. Some of these are commercially available in VHS, DVD or CD formats. The programmes published to accompany the live performances contain pertinent comments by the arrangers, who have usually had access to more extant sources than this author. Two important German theses surveying original scores for silent films by Rainer Fabich (1993) and Ulrich Rügner (1988) have included detailed thematic analyses of Meisel's scores for *Potemkin* and *Der heilige Berg* (dir. Arnold Fanck, 1926), respectively. Their findings are elaborated upon in

Chapters 4 and 6. In addition, Christopher Morris (2008) has approached *Der heilige Berg* through the prisms of Kracauer and modernism, making some important conclusions regarding Meisel's penchant for closely synchronized scoring.

2 Meisel's ideal film score

In September 1925, around six months before he began work on *Potemkin*, Meisel published one of his first articles on film music. It was an account of a typical orchestral accompaniment to a silent film, whereby Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony would be played underneath for as long as the music lasted, before changing to some other standard. In his view, such a compilation of well-worn selections from pre-existing music, randomly aligned with the images regardless of appositeness or general 'fit', represented the worst practices. Meisel described the sort of accompaniment he would have created:

Naturally now and then a subject calls for the use of well-known themes, for example in historical film: the Marseillaise, Fridericus Rex [a popular military march], etc. However in principle the artistic film, exactly as the play, requires its own music to be written for the action, which coincides with each event, each movement, yes which even characterizes each mood and above all illustrates each noise. A short overture using the main themes of the film must introduce the action and immediately establish contact with the audience, as we already have in the opera and especially theatrical drama. . . .

The music must bring to life each street noise, reproduce the sounds of machinery, etc., in order to help the spectator towards a realistic experience. . . . There is also by no means an absolute necessity to accompany the whole film musically. On the contrary, some 'soundless' moments have a far more powerful effect and in that case the following new entry of the music arouses a much more vivid impression. In short: strive for the unified fusion of image and music! (Meisel 1925-09-19)

Within a month, a further article appeared, suggesting his ideal film score to an imagined adaptation of the *Faust* legend:

The [film score] must represent each event and record each contrast in mood; the themes of the leading characters must move through the action by means of leitmotifs, the emphasising of dramatic climaxes must help the highpoints achieve a more intense experience . . .

Let us take, for example, a film score for *Faust*, if it were to be produced. Each central figure receives a theme appropriate to their character; these themes will be combined into a short overture, in which the exposition of the work is already given musically. Then, in concurrence with the overture, the cast list runs on screen – so, for example, Faust is on the screen, the Faust theme in the orchestra; Mephistopheles is on the screen, the Mephistopheles theme in the orchestra etc., so that the audience immediately becomes familiarized and can follow with inner understanding. The overture leads into the start of the film, let us say into Faust's study and consequently into the restless Faust theme – an unsatisfying agonising sound sequence until Faust rouses himself to summon the spirit. Now the flame from which the spirit steps must be heard to strike upwards . . . Mephistopheles appears, accompanied by his infernal theme, his sneering diabolical laughter heard in the orchestra. The themes of Faust and Mephistopheles now ring out in contrapuntal struggles analogous to the action, perpetually varied. A grotesque, jaunty noise music in tantalizing instrumentation will underpin the scene in Auerbach's cellar, continually increasing until the enchantment. (E. M. 1925-10-10)

Meisel may have read press reports that F. W. Murnau was shooting *Faust* for Ufa (Universum Film AG), Germany's principal film conglomerate, around that time; it was released in October 1926 with a score by Becce (see below), chiefly compiled from his own published collections of mood pieces. These two articles from 1925 show both Meisel's early ambitions to write original film accompaniments and his blatant self-promotion in the commercial sector. Meisel's blueprint for a film accompaniment is clear: a combination of original composition and apposite borrowings closely tailored to the dramatic action, a simple leitmotif technique to explicate the drama, and musical representations to create a heightened realism. These hallmarks of narrative scoring would come to full fruition in the scores of Steiner and Korngold.

The following discussion provides an overview of orchestral accompaniment common in German cinemas during the 1920s and a survey of original scores in Germany. The presence of narrative scoring techniques in silent-film accompaniments in Berlin is then demonstrated via particular focus on two scores

from the early 1910s and through an examination of American practices in the 1920s, as exemplified by Rapée.

Berlin's West End: *Filmpaläste* and orchestral accompaniment

The heterogeneous nature of silent-film accompaniment in Germany was briefly surveyed by Heinz Dettke (1995) prior to Altman's study of American practices. Though a preliminary to his ultimate focus on the cinema organ, Dettke's opening chapters outline a similar world of multiple practices with overviews of accompaniments generated by phonograph cylinders and gramophone discs, mechanical and automated musical instruments, piano, harmonium, organ, lecturers, bands and orchestras. This multiplicity is also reflected in German trade-press advertisements for the latest sheet music, musical instruments, electrical and mechanical apparatus.

Film palaces were the venues where one would most likely experience a true orchestral accompaniment to films, where the orchestra had a balanced complement of strings, brass, woodwind and percussion. Such venues were part of the 'normal' film experience in many major American and European cities, with those in New York being the most opulent. Berlin already had 22 film palaces by 1925, each having more than 1000 seats. There were also 180 small theatres (fewer than 300 seats) and 48 of medium size (between 600 and 1000 seats) elsewhere in the city (Kreimeier 1999: 112). Dettke (1995: 38) has estimated that, in 1929, less than 0.5 per cent of the total number of cinemas in Germany (5078) had a 'genuine' orchestra, a figure equating to fewer than two dozen. Since there were also film palaces in other German cities, this figure implies that not even all film palaces had a regular orchestra of reasonable proportions. The overwhelming majority of cinemas would have had accompaniments by smaller ensembles, solo keyboard players, gramophone records or mechanical musical instruments.

The British cinema organist Dr George Tootell made an extensive tour of German cinemas in 1928, inaugurating cinema organs. He published a report in *Der Kinematograph* (13 December 1928) regarding the typical number of musicians employed throughout Germany in the venues he had visited (cited in Dettke 1995: 38). He estimated the size of orchestra in relation to seating capacity as 10–12 for venues with 500–600 seats, 18–20 for larger venues (up to 1000 seats), and around 30 for the largest venues (2000 seats). Whilst some of the film palaces had even larger orchestras of 50–60 players (Dettke 1995: 38), the super-sized orchestras of seventy musicians and above were reserved for gala occasions and the most lavish premieres. With the exception of the original silent-film premiere of *Potemkin* in April 1926 (which none of the film palaces were prepared to screen), all the scores Meisel composed in Germany had premieres in one of Berlin’s film palaces and at least three (*Der heilige Berg, Berlin* and *Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten*¹) were performed by large orchestras. This is summarized below in Table 2.1.

2.1 Premieres of Meisel’s scores in Berlin’s film palaces

Venue	Owned by	Established as a cinema	Capacity	Premieres of films scored by Meisel
Capitol am Zoo	Emelka-Konzern	1925	1270	<i>Überflüssige Menschen</i>
Mozartsaal	Terra A.G. Ufa (from 1926)	1910	924	<i>Der Blaue Expreß</i>
Tauentzien-Palast	(independent)	1927	1080	<i>Berlin</i> <i>Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten</i> <i>Deutsche Rundfunk</i> <i>Panzerkreuzer</i> <i>Potemkin</i> (sound version) <i>Die kleine Schraube</i>
Ufa-Palast am Zoo	Ufa	1919	2260	<i>Der heilige Berg</i>

Sources: Dettke (1995: 37; 358–9); Flickinger (2007: 79)

Some venues had a harmonium or cinema organ to supplement the orchestra and to allow the music to continue whilst the orchestral players had a rest. There were

¹ German release title for Eisenstein’s *October*, named after John Reed’s eyewitness account of the revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York, 1919).

surprisingly few organs installed in Germany during the period 1921–31, only 146, and most of these were installed in the latter part of the 1920s. The native-built Oskalyd organ cornered forty-three per cent of the German market (Dettke 1995: 167). In August 1926, one of the larger three-manual instruments was installed in the Ufa-Palast am Zoo (Dettke 1995: 358), the venue for the premiere of *Der heilige Berg* in November that year. Apparently the start of that film premiere was delayed, but eventually ‘the musicians were lured out by the thundering sounds of the Oskalyd’ (Haf. 1926-12-18).

A brief history of original scores in Germany

When discussing general approaches to silent-film accompaniment, Ulrich Siebert (2001: 448) identified four co-existent strands: *Improvisation*, *Kompilation* or *Illustration*, *Autorenillustration*, and *Originalkomposition*. Some of these terms and their definitions derive from the introductory essay to the first volume of the *Allgemeines Handbuch der Filmmusik* (Erdmann *et al.* 1927a: 6), discussed below. The strands are not always mutually exclusive and all may embody aspects of an original score to varying degrees. The practice of commissioning special scores for silent films in Germany appears to have taken hold around 1913, a few years later than in other European countries and America. For example, Saint-Saëns composed one of the earliest special scores in France for *L’Assassinat de duc de Guise* (dir. Charles le Bargy and André Calmettes, 1908).

Improvisation

The practice of improvisation is relevant to Meisel, despite being chiefly the domain of piano and cinema-organ accompaniments. There are various descriptions of Meisel’s scoring methodology throughout his career which all reflect how he ‘composed with his eyes’, responding instantly to the image, as a silent-film pianist might react on first encountering a new film. For example, his description of the

visual inspiration behind the leitmotifs in his score to *Der heilige Berg* (Meisel 1927-04-01), discussed in Chapter 6, or the manner in which his score to *The Crimson Circle* had been ‘spontaneously composed to suit the action of the story as it took place’ (*Bioscope* 1929-08-21). It is also significant that for *Potemkin* and *The Crimson Circle* (if not all his film work), Meisel was able to compose at the piano whilst watching the films via a projector installed in his own home (Blakiston 1929-02-11; *Onlooker* 1929-06-11), enjoying the luxury of unfettered access to the film print rather than relying on timing sheets. There are moments in Meisel’s scores where he used basic improvisational techniques (such as theme and variation). These are often comparable to instructions in the American film accompaniment manual by Lang and West (1970 [1920]) and are discussed at appropriate points throughout the thesis.

Kompilation or Illustration

The terms *Kompilation* and *Illustration* were used interchangeably during the 1920s for a film accompaniment consisting of selected extracts from pre-existing light classical and popular music, sometimes interspersed with original material (Siebert 2001: 448). The career and publications of Becce exemplify all the main artefacts of the compilation practice: compiled scores, cue sheets, original repertory pieces and a thematic guide to existing repertory pieces. In the 1910s, Becce became well-known in Berlin as composer and conductor for screenings of Oskar Messter’s films at the Mozartsaal Theater, and, in the subsequent decade, as director of Ufa’s Music Department, where he conducted in many of the Berlin showcase theatres (Wulff 2008). Becce provided scores for some of the most famous German silent films, including *Der letzte Mann* (dir. F. W. Murnau, 1924). Some examples of Becce’s scores are given in Table 2.2, below; they are a mixture of compilations (from pre-existing and original repertory pieces) and original scores. His scores were

an important contribution to the development of a musical language specifically for the cinema. Although the quality of his music, stylistically linked to the 19th century, is often modest, it is extremely well suited to the demands of the screen. As early as the 1920s he had defined topoi which would become norms even in many sound films. (Simeon 2001)

There are various terms for a cue sheet in German, including *Musikszzenarium*, *Musikaufstellung* and *Musikzusammenstellung* (Simeon 1990: 84 and 92, n. 17). Becce allegedly created the first published German cue sheet, for *Die Räuberbraut* (dir. Robert Wiene, 1916), after which the practice became widespread in Germany (Simeon 1990: 88). Where he was unable to find pre-existing music appropriate for a given dramatic situation, Becce would compose something suitable and was one of the first to publish his own repertory pieces. These appeared in a set of twelve volumes entitled *Kinothek: Neue Filmmusik*, one of the earliest anthologies of music written specifically for film to be published in Germany (by Schlesinger), released over a decade from 1919 onwards. This series comprised eighty-one pieces, including sixteen arrangements of Chopin piano pieces and works by long-forgotten composers such as Stefanoff (full details available in Birett 1970: 19–21). Becce also made recordings for those cinemas without musicians able to read music (Wulff 2008). Most volumes concentrated on a single general mood (volume IIIa, for example, was *Grosses Drama*) and each piece, rarely lasting more than three minutes, was available in several arrangements from solo piano to large orchestra. Becce's longer pieces were really complexes of contrasting smaller segments, as can be seen in the 'Andante appassionato' (*Kinothek* No. 8, 1920) reproduced in Rügner (1988: 303–6). The *Kinothek* was hugely successful, but ultimately Wulff regards its impact as unintentionally detrimental,

because the modular division into a succession of scenes destroyed the interrelationships between the scenes and led to a manner of industry stereotypes and standardization of film music. The original intention of the *Kinothek* (like similar projects) was completely the opposite – to liberate musical

accompaniment from the arbitrariness of the ‘man at the piano’, to value it as
art . . . (Wulff 2008)

Becce’s character pieces also appeared in other ‘mood music’ collections, such as the *Filmharmonie* series by the composer Werner Richard Heymann, alongside pieces by Huppertz, Hans May, Heymann and others (Rügner 1988: 316–19). The *Kinothek* and *Filmharmonie* collections became part of a much larger publishing enterprise to provide cinemas with a constant stream of new music. Over time, Becce’s *Kinothek* was one of ten in Schlesinger’s *Universal-Film-Musik* series; this series was advertised on the back cover of certain *Kinothek* volumes, proclaiming 509 different numbers from which to create an *Original-Film-Illustration* (Rügner 1988: 74; for advertisement, see 302). This highlights the confusion over what constituted an original composition in the silent era; a compiled score was as likely to be labelled *Original* as a newly composed score. The advertisement also demonstrates that the term *Illustration* was synonymous with *Kompilation* in the trade press, which often termed film accompaniment *Filmillustration* or *Illustrationsmusik*. Similarly, those that created the film music were often known as ‘Illustrators’, as, for example in these advertisements from *Lichtbild-Bühne*, 15 January 1927: ‘Alexander Schirmann . . . Illustrator für Uraufführungen [premieres]’; ‘Kapellmeister Paul A. Hensel . . . Orchesterleiter und Filmillustrator, Ufa-Palast, Königstadt’. However, to add to the confusion, there are also examples where *Filmillustration* and *Illustrationsmusik* were used for original compositions: Meisel’s scores for *Berlin* (*Film-Kurier* 1927-06-04) and *Der blaue Expreß* (K. L. 1930-10-25) were described in this manner.

Becce was also highly active in the trade press, founding a monthly newspaper, *Das Kinomusikblatt*, in 1921. This was relaunched in 1926 as *Film-Ton-Kunst*, its sole concern (stated under the title) to promote ‘die künstlerische Musikillustration des Lichtbildes’ (‘the artistic musical illustration of the screen’). The culmination of Becce’s aim to raise the artistic quality of film accompaniment came with the publication of the two-volume *Allgemeines Handbuch der Filmmusik* in 1927,

conceived jointly with Hans Erdmann and Ludwig Brav. The *Allgemeines Handbuch* is an invaluable artefact of silent-film accompaniment, the largest and most comprehensive thematic index of its kind and a summation of the *Kompilation/Illustration* practice in Germany. The first volume (Erdmann et al. 1927a) contains an introductory essay, 'Musik und Film', and two indices of composers and headings, cross-referencing 3050 pieces by more than 200 composers listed in the companion volume. This second volume, the 'Thematisches Skalenregister' (Erdmann et al. 1927b), has thematic entries for pieces written specifically for film accompaniment alongside opera fantasias, extracts from operas and concert music. It is organized according to degrees of dramatic tension, movement and intensity within 140 keyword categories concerning mood and form (Dettke 1995: 42; the first twelve thematic entries are reproduced in Siebert 2001: 451–2). With hindsight, this vast compendium was published too late to have had much commercial impact, appearing in the same year as sound film began to take hold in America. Furthermore, at a cost of thirty Reichsmarks, the *Allgemeines Handbuch* was also beyond the reach of many of the music directors it intended to help (Ottenheym 1944: 47). Ultimately Becce and others were fighting a losing battle, since, with little or no rehearsal time before new films were screened, '[e]ven the talented could only achieve a truly artistic job sporadically, when there were frequently 9000 metres of film per week to illustrate in the majority of cinemas' (Dettke 1995: 45).

***Autorenillustration* or *Originalkomposition*?**

There is nothing in English directly equivalent to the term *Autorenillustration*, or 'author's illustration', used to define scores written after production of a film had been completed, that is without the composer having had any artistic say in the whole concept of the film and music (Siebert 2001: 450). By contrast, *Originalkomposition*, in theory at least, represents the ideal circumstances in which director and composer collaborated from the outset of the film and during production. Meisel achieved this

to varying extents with Ruttmann (*Berlin*) and Eisenstein (*October*). It must be stressed that the terminology found in the trade press does not consistently reflect this distinction between *Autorenillustration* and *Originalmusik*; accompaniments described variously as *Originalmusik* or just *Filmmusik* in most cases fulfil the criteria for an *Autorenillustration*. Two *Film-Kurier* articles from 1927 commented that the public was often being misled regarding the originality of a film score ‘due to the practice of several producers naming prominent composers or conductors in the opening credits, even when the music was only compiled and not newly composed’ (Dettke 1995: 53).

The term *Autorenillustration* is related to that of *Autorenfilm* or ‘author’s film’, a description denoting cultural prestige which was attached to many films around 1913–14 under the impact of the earlier French *film d’art* movement (Elsaesser 1996b: 138). The prefix *Autoren* presumably carried over its legacy as a quality stamp into the 1920s and as a guarantee of accompaniments by ‘famous name’ musicians already known for their work in other fields (opera, concert hall, theatre, etc.). The prefatory material to the first volume of the *Allgemeines Handbuch* (Erdmann *et al.* 1927a: 6–7) contains a representative selection of forty-four German *Autorenillustrationen* by twenty-three composers (including Meisel), created in the period 1913–27. The list has been reproduced in Table 2.2, re-arranged chronologically and expanded with information regarding film directors and production studios. The scores for *Sumurun* (dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1920) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (dir. Robert Wiene, 1926) are not representative film accompaniments, having been adapted by the composers Victor Hollaender and Richard Strauss from their existing stage works for pantomime and opera, respectively. The editors of the *Allgemeines Handbuch* indicated that one quarter of the scores had printed piano scores. These are also highlighted in Table 2.2; Meisel’s scores for *Potemkin* and *Der heilige Berg* have been added to this subset.

2.2 List of Autorenillustrationen from the *Allgemeines Handbuch*

	Film	Composer	Printed piano Score	Studio	Director
1913	<i>Richard Wagner</i>	Giuseppe Becce	✓	Messter Film GmbH (Berlin)	William Wauer / Carl Froelich
1913	<i>Schuldig</i>	Giuseppe Becce	✓	Messter Film GmbH (Berlin)	Hans Oberländer
1913	<i>Der Student von Prag</i>	Josef Weiss		Deutsche Bioscop GmbH (Berlin)	Hanns Heinz Ewers / Stellen Rye
1914	<i>Komtesse Ursel</i>	Giuseppe Becce	✓	Messter Film GmbH (Berlin)	Curt A. Stark
1914	<i>Bismarck</i>	Ferdinand Hummel		Eiko-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Richard Schott
1918	<i>Der Trompeter von Säckingen</i>	Ferdinand Hummel		Eiko-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Franz Porten
1919	<i>Veritas vincit</i>	Ferdinand Hummel	✓	May-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Joe May
1919–20	<i>Die Herrin der Welt, Teilen I-VII</i>	Ferdinand Hummel		May-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Joe May
1920	<i>Sumurun</i>	Victor Hollaender		PAGU (Berlin)	Ernst Lubitsch
1920	<i>Das Weib des Pharao</i>	Eduard Künnecke		Ernst Lubitsch-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Ernst Lubitsch
1920	<i>Der Golem, wie er zur Welt kam</i>	Hans Landsberger	✓	PAGU (Berlin)	Paul Wegener
1921	<i>Die Verschwörung zu Genua</i>	Hans Landsberger	✓	Gloria-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Paul Leni
1921	<i>Die Hintertreppe</i>	Hans Landsberger		Henny Porten-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Leopold Jessner & Paul Leni
1921	<i>Das indische Grabmal, (2 Teile)</i>	Wilhelm Löwitt		May-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Joe May
1921–23	<i>Fridericus Rex Teil I (von 4 Teile)</i>	Marc Roland		Cserépy-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Arzén von Cserépy
1921–23	<i>Fridericus Rex Teil II (von 4 Teile)</i>	Marc Roland		Cserépy-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Arzén von Cserépy
1922	<i>Nosferatu</i>	Hans Erdmann		Prana-Film GmbH (Berlin)	F. W. Murnau
1923	<i>Die Tragödie der Liebe (4 Teile)</i>	Wilhelm Löwitt		May-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Joe May
1923	<i>Der steinere Reiter</i>	Giuseppe Becce			Fritz Wendhausen
1923	<i>Der verlorene Schuh</i>	Guido Bagier		Decla-Bioscop AG (Berlin)	Ludwig Berger / Ufa
1923	<i>Tatjana</i>	Guido Bagier			Robert Dinesen
1923	<i>Schatten</i>	Ernst Riege		Pan-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Artur Robison
1923	<i>Phantom</i>	Leo Spieß		Uco-Film GmbH (Berlin)	F. W. Murnau
1923	<i>Die Austreibung</i>	Joseph Vieth		Decla-Bioscop AG (Berlin)	F. W. Murnau

	Film	Composer	Printed piano Score	Studio	Director
1924	<i>Alt Heidelberg</i>	Marc Roland	✓	Cserépy-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Hans Behrendt
1924	<i>Die Nibelungen, Teil I: Siegfried; Teil II: Kriemhilds Rache</i>	Gottfried Huppertz	✓	Decla-Bioscop AG (Berlin)	Fritz Lang
1924	<i>Larven und Fratzen</i>	Ludwig Brav			
1924	<i>Sylvester</i>	Klaus Pringsheim		Rex-Film AG (Berlin)	Lupu Pick
1924	<i>Mein Leopold</i>	Joseph Vieth		BB-Film Fabikration (Berlin)	Heinrich Bolten-Baeckers
1924	<i>Michael</i>	Joseph Vieth		Decla-Bioscop AG (Berlin)	Carl Theodore Dreyer
1925	<i>Das Fräulein von Amt</i>	Otto Urack			Hanns Schwarz
1925	<i>Das alte Ballhaus</i>	Paul Lincke		Althoff & Co. (Berlin)	Wolfgang Neff
1925	<i>Zur Chronik von Grieshuus</i>	Gottfried Huppertz	✓	UFA	Arthur von Gerlach
1925	<i>Der letzte Mann</i>	Giuseppe Becce	✓	UFA	F. W. Murnau
1925	<i>Tartüff</i>	Giuseppe Becce	✓	UFA	F. W. Murnau
1925	<i>Das Blumenwunder</i>	Eduard Künnecke		BASF AG (Ludwigshafen)	Max Reichmann?
1925	<i>Bismarck, Teil I</i>	Winfried Wolff		Bismarck-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Ernst Wendt
1926	<i>Der Kreuzzug des Weibes</i>	Friedrich Hollaender		Arthur Ziehm	Martin Berger
1926	<i>Panzerkreuzer Potemkin</i>	Edmund Meisel	✓	Sovkino	Eisenstein
1926	<i>Überflüssige Menschen</i>	Edmund Meisel		[Phoenix-Film/Prometheus]	Rasumny
1926	<i>Der heilige Berg</i>	Edmund Meisel	✓	UFA	Arnold Fanck
1926	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	Richard Strauss		Pan-Film AG (Wien)	Robert Wiene
1926	<i>Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed</i>	Wolfgang Zeller		Comenius-Film GmbH (Berlin)	Lotte Reiniger
1927	<i>Metropolis</i>	Gottfried Huppertz		UFA	Fritz Lang

Source: Erdmann *et al.* (1927a: 6–7)

The existence of these printed scores in 1927 demonstrates that the compositions were available to hire and were potentially performed beyond their premiere venues. The term *Autorenillustration* was no guarantee of originality, since the editors acknowledged that it was not always possible to determine whether scores were newly composed or partly compiled (an example of the latter being Brav's *Larven und Fratzen*).

The presence of narrative scoring techniques

Narrative scoring techniques – such as distinctions between diegetic and nondiegetic music, leitmotif systems and musical representations of dramatic content – can be found in original accompaniments to German feature films as early as the 1910s, including the scores to *Richard Wagner* (dir. William Wauer and Carl Froelich, 1913) and *Der Student von Prag* (dir. Hans Heinz Ewers and Stellen Rye, 1913). Becce, due to his renown as a conductor and his passing resemblance to Wagner, was hired to play the title role in *Richard Wagner*, one of the first film biographies. He also provided the score, which has been examined by Simeon (1996) and Henzel (2003). Becce composed a Wagnerian pastiche, interspersed with pre-existing pieces selected for their geographical, ethnic or political associations, all '[e]ntirely in keeping with international arranging practices at the time' (Simeon 1996: 221). For example, there is a Polish hymn during a Polish banquet, 'La Marseillaise' when Wagner escapes the uprisings in Dresden, and extracts from Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven for Wagner's apprentice years. There are also instances where, in the manner of sound film, Becce makes seamless distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic music in exact synchronization with the dramatic action: when Wagner intermittently interrupts an opera rehearsal (Part 2, scene 1), Becce's score appropriately dips in and out of Rossini's overture to *The Barber of Seville* (Henzel 2003: 152).

Der Student von Prag had a special piano accompaniment composed by the piano virtuoso Josef Weiss, analysed by Fabich (1993: 127–57). The piano score contains some indicators of screen action and isolated suggestions with regard to instrumentation, hinting that perhaps an orchestral score was planned but not realized. The score is constructed from an abundance of leitmotifs (for people, objects and emotions), many of which develop through variation but are seldom heard in combination, all within a framework of musically autonomous sections. There are also quotations from folk songs to evoke particular atmospheres and Chopin's Polonaise in A minor, Op. 40 No. 1, is used diegetically for a ball scene (or in Fabich's parlance as *On-Musik*). Simple musical descriptions bring attention to visual details (triadic triplet movement for a galloping horse) and dramatic moments are emphasized (a stinger chord for a revolver shot). Weiss played the score himself one week after the premiere (it was not ready in time) and subsequently on tour around cinemas in Germany, for which a comprehensive guide to the leitmotifs was published, containing thirty-nine thematic examples.

Leitmotif systems

The extent to which recurring themes and leitmotif systems were used in surviving original and compiled scores written in Germany has not been systematically analysed, but the technique can be found in many of the scores listed in Table 2.2, above, in addition to *Der Student von Prag*. Simeon (1990: 84) found leitmotif systems in some early wholly original scores by Becce, for example *Schuldig* (1913) and *Komtesse Ursel* (1914). Examples from the 1920s include Becce's *Tartüff* (1925) and Meisel's *Der heilige Berg*, Huppertz's *Die Nibelungen* (parts I and II; dir. Fritz Lang, 1924) and Meisel's *Potemkin*, identified by Rügner (1988: 122–63, 170–90) and Fabich (1993: 192–220, 237–76) respectively. It is hardly surprising that Wagnerian techniques were adopted in early German film scores, particularly since many composers working in Germany had obvious links with his ideas (Weiss was a

pupil of Liszt's and Becce had a background in opera as composer and conductor). This cultural heritage also influenced the history of American film music, thanks to a regular influx of European composers and musicians. Even before World War I, film musicians and theorists in the USA had frequently mentioned Wagner's name and borrowed highbrow Wagnerian concepts such as the leitmotif system to promote a greater synthesis between image and music (Paulin 2000). Wagner's name was used to legitimize and create aesthetic value for the cinema experience; it was hoped that this veneer of respectability would attract and retain the attendance of more sophisticated middle-class audiences to a new medium with lowbrow associations.

Rügner noted that '[w]hilst Wagner's leitmotifs constitute a dense musical web of meanings, symbols and significations, by contrast Becce's leitmotivic work in *Tartüff* appears essentially simpler and casual' (Rügner 1988: 129). This is because a great gulf lies between operatic and cinematic Wagnerism, as the infamous critique by Theodor Adorno and Eisler explains:

The fundamental character of the leitmotif – its salience and brevity – was related to the gigantic dimensions of the Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian music dramas. Just because the leitmotif as such is musically rudimentary, it requires a large musical canvas if it is to take on a structural meaning beyond that of a signpost. . . . This relation is entirely absent in the motion picture, which requires continual interruption of one element by another rather than continuity. . . .

[In the motion picture] the function of the leitmotif has been reduced to the level of a musical lackey, who announces his master with an important air even though the eminent personage is clearly recognizable to everyone. The effective technique of the past thus becomes a mere duplication, ineffective and uneconomical. At the same time, since it cannot be developed to its full musical significance in the motion picture, its use leads to extreme poverty of composition. (Adorno and Eisler 1994 [1947]: 5–6)

Adorno and Eisler made no allowance for the relative simplicity of a film scenario compared with a Wagnerian drama, or the ludicrously short period of composition typically afforded to film composers. Their critique was largely aimed at American sound-film scores, but was equally applicable to thematic practices in the silent era.

Altman (2004: 375) named the New York impresario Samuel L. Rothapfel as the person in his opinion 'most responsible for watering down Wagner', because he pioneered an unrefined thematic approach in his musical settings from the 1910s. His style was widely copied in American cue-sheet practice and exported to Europe. Typically, Rothapfel would select a pre-existing theme, which he repeated (and perhaps varied according to context) every time the main character appeared on screen. Whilst this reduced the number of pre-existing pieces required to compile a score, the result was often a monotonous over-use and abuse of a few well-known pieces, giving no scope for developing musical ideas. Nevertheless, the leitmotif was central to the rise of specially composed scores, because, just as Wagner realized, newly composed thematic material could still generate its own sense of familiarity through repetition (Altman 2004: 377–8). Thematic accompaniment quickly developed into a narrative device whereby the traits of a particular character were instantly recognizable through a 'clear music-to-character correspondence' (Altman 2004: 375). This trend typifies Meisel's thematic practice and would also dominate feature-film accompaniment in the sound era. Film composers also realized that leitmotifs had the ability to function as more than mere signposts, achieving various degrees of psychological depth through alteration (of mode, rhythm, metre, orchestration, etc.) or distortion to present changing moods, emotions and situations. Leitmotifs achieve the greatest significance when liberated from their associated images, requiring the audience to make connections without any direct visual correlations. This became a useful tool for close-ups, when the inner thoughts and motivations of a character could be registered through musical means without recourse to intertitles or flashbacks (Buhler and Neumeyer 1994: 376–7). Opportunities for psychological depth in the music are primarily dependent on the content and editing of the film; the absence of such moments from the score is therefore not always a sign of weakness in the composer and his compositional skills.

Exact illustration of the image

Aspects of the Weiss score to *Der Student von Prag* exhibit some close parallelism of the action, a narrative scoring technique which, like anything prone to emotional excess (such as melodrama), is often criticized because musical logic is eschewed in favour of the drama. Close parallelism has its dangers: such scoring can become a redundant and intrusive reiteration of what the audience already knows through the screen action. Dramatic perspective may also be compromised if inconsequential events are highlighted with the same impact as those which are pivotal to the dramatic development.

The exact illustration of the image was a key feature in the film accompaniments devised by Rapée. A Hungarian émigré composer who became one of America's star conductors, Rapée was renowned for his accompaniments at various high-profile American cinemas, including the Capitol in New York, and known to millions of Americans through his regular orchestral radio broadcasts. He was also the author of two important handbooks for cinema music directors: the anthology *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists* (1974 [1924]) and an index, the *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures* (1970 [1925]). When Ufa refurbished one of its flagship theatres, the Ufa-Palast am Zoo, for the new autumn season in 1925, they imported American methods of film exhibition to replicate the typical experience in a New York film palace, including an elaborate stage show before the main feature film. As part of this approach, Ufa hired Rapée to bring some American pizzazz to the rostrum. Rapée's style was seen as outrageously extravagant by many Berlin critics. At the re-opening of the Ufa-Palast am Zoo he presided over an orchestra of seventy-five players, at least twice the size of those in other Berlin film palaces, and the press mocked the 'American' manner in which he choreographed sections of the orchestra, directing them to stand for their solos during variety numbers (Töteberg 1992: 106–7). Rapée spent almost a year in Berlin, but it is likely that such a large orchestra was

only maintained on gala occasions during his tenure. There is no evidence to corroborate whether Meisel attended any film screenings conducted by Rapée.

The deluge of American films unleashed by Ufa during the 1925–6 season was not universally accepted. The German audience's relationship to American films was 'a broken one, at times favourable, as in the case of Chaplin, Keaton or Fairbanks, at times negative, when the film fare being offered was nothing more than commercial product' (Horak 1993: 55). The negative aspect is borne out by a controversy in which Rapée was unwittingly embroiled in May 1926. Whilst he was conducting the second showing of *Gier nach Geld* (*Lust for Money*, or *Greed*; dir. Eric von Stroheim, 1924) at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo, an allegedly pre-arranged disturbance from within the audience compelled the manager to stop the film. The screening of another American film at Ufa's Gloria-Palast was also disrupted (*Variety* 1926-06-09). The general cinema-going public, however, were not deterred by these anti-American demonstrations and the statistics for Berlin cinema attendance show a continued fascination with the film craze and Hollywood films (Flickinger 2007: 83). The *Greed* debacle demonstrates that film and cinemas were part of the political arena and intellectual debate in Berlin. During that same month, May 1926, there was continued political wrangling in the press over whether screenings of *Potemkin* should be allowed to continue; the Berlin censors banned the film for a second time for part of July 1926 until further cuts were made (see Appendix II).

Rapée's prowess was generally admired for the fresh impulse he gave to film accompaniment during his time in Germany. For example, the review in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (17 October 1925) of *Der Mann, der die Ohrfeigen bekam* (*He who gets slapped*; dir. Victor Sjöström, 1924), screened at the Ufa-Palast in October 1925, praised Rapée as a 'fabulous conductor and film illustrator' (Ihering 1959: 501). The review of *Buster Keaton, der Matrose* (*The Navigator*; dir. Donald Crisp, 1924) from 6 January 1926 was even more adulatory:

Rapée, the minute he accompanies film or makes music which is related to the film [perhaps in a diegetic context?], is first class and is unsurpassed in Berlin. . . . Such precision in film accompaniment! Such masterly instrumentation! (W. R. Heymann). Schmidt-Gentner was the first who recognized the significance of special film music in Berlin, in the Alhambra and the Mozartsaal. But he has stood still and was overtaken by Rapée long ago.

(Ihering 1959: 508)

A more concrete description of Rapée's style can be gleaned from reviews of *Variété* (dir. E. A. Dupont, 1925), which praised his musical impressions of the fairground setting, his multi-faceted approach, and subtle simulation of a ticking clock in the accompaniment:

here as the poet, the illustrator, the caricaturist, the composer . . . He catches the noises, sounds, cacophonies, jingles and acoustic effects . . . It is impossible to relate everything that Rapée has packed into this film, so only a few examples will serve as illustration. The wife of Boss [the main character, a trapeze artist] is also the piano-player [in the film] and the piano [in the cinema] is situated far behind on the stage – it is not played from within the orchestra. Then: the accompaniment by the 70 musicians of the Ufa Orchestra is so resonant, yet so discreet and so symphonic, that the instant the scene in the vaudeville show appears, only vaudeville music is heard, just as it has sounded since time immemorial and unfortunately still sounds today. Off-key bass notes in the trombone, sleazy leading top parts, the offbeat chords of the obligatory violin, all the usual blunders also resound here. Melodies containing textual allusions are not played in their original form, but are varied according to the sentiment of the situation. 'Trink' mer noch ein Tröpfchen!' [a popular German drinking song]. One knows the melody even when it is in the minor and only its outline is audible, since the glass which is brought to the lips brings death to the drinker . . . This feat surely represents weeks of work. One hopes that it is emulated.

(*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1925-11-21; cited in Bolte 1992: 148–9)

Once in Rapée's 'Variété' a clock was ticking. Of course it ticked legitimately through the whole scene in which it was involved – but it was audible in the orchestra every time the gaze of the actor anxiously noticed it . . . Also for this man, whose senses Rapée allowed us to see, hear and feel, the ticking started when he became conscious of the passing of time, even though it was hardly ever shown in 'reality'. (Wallner 1927-07-08; reproduced in Birett 1970: 164–5)

From the description of the *Variété* accompaniment above, it can be deduced that Rapée went to great pains in order to match his score to the diegesis. He delineated location and characters, reflected scene changes, created synchronized sound effects and represented extended diegetic music-making as accurately and as authentically as possible (the physical separation of the piano from the orchestra enhancing the change through a different auditory perspective). All this was achieved through the combinatorial possibilities of a large orchestra, which Rapée used ‘to bond the optical experience with an acoustic one’ (Bolte 1992: 149).

After Rapée had returned to America, Erdmann wrote a damning lead article in *Film-Ton-Kunst*, in which he condemned Rapée as an overpaid salesman whose business acumen outshone his musical talent:

In the field of film music he has hardly created anything essentially better than even the usual superior daily fare. One difference lies in the means and presentation, which were available to him in greater abundance. If he had been ambitious . . . he could have been the great 're-organiser' of German film music. He was not ambitious, Rappée [*sic*] burst like a soap bubble without leaving behind any traces, and I know of nothing to refer to which one could have learned from him in particular, unless it be something negative, that he gave an unsurpassable example of how to take advantage of the film industry . . . for himself in the most convenient and successful manner. (H. E. 1926-08-15)

Dettke disagreed, describing Rapée ‘as not only the most interesting and most highly paid, but also the best movie-music director in Berlin, who, with his compilations and his special orchestral arrangements had shown new ways’ (Dettke 1995: 37).

Rapée equated parallelism with Wagnerian practices, hailing the composer as the one who had ‘established the fundamental principles of the music drama of today and it is his work which typifies to the greatest extent and in the minutest detail the accompanying of action with music’ (Rapée 1970 [1925]: 8). Whilst Paulin (2000: 68) regards Rapée’s text as a deliberate misreading to justify his own film-accompaniment practice, it is further evidence that Wagner’s name was being used to validate widespread practices in film scoring during the silent era. Moreover, it shows

that precise synchronization of music and image, often described as ‘mickey-mousing’, because of the close audio-visual choreography in Disney’s first sound cartoons from 1928 onwards, pre-dates the cartoon character.

Mickey takes the blame

The most prominent feature of the early Mickey Mouse cartoons is the graphic way in which the animated characters instantly transform their shape in exact synchronization with the changing rhythms and contours of the music, as if the two media are seamlessly bonded together. In America during the first decade of the sound era, exact choreography of sound and image was tolerated and even expected in cartoons and film musicals, but the same technique was derided when used in scores for feature films, as is demonstrated in the comments of Aaron Copland:

[When] ‘Mickey-Mousing’ a film . . . the music, wherever possible, is made to mimic everything on the screen. An actor can’t lift an eyebrow without the music helping him do it. What is amusing when applied to a Disney fantasy becomes disastrous in its effect upon a straight or serious drama.

(Copland 1941; reprinted in Cooke 2010: 88)

The pejorative use of the term mickey-mousing is due to ‘the lower status animated cartoons have traditionally held in film studies and because of the implication that exact illustration is a rather tedious and silly way to relate music and image’ (Curtis 1992: 201). Disney and his composers (chiefly Wilfred Jackson and Carl Stalling) did not invent the mickey-mousing conventions, but their style preserved and consolidated in sound film many existing accompaniment practices which had previously only been heard in a live context (for example: vaudeville, stage melodrama, ballet, pantomime and silent film). There are many examples of close synchronization to be found in originally composed silent-film scores – including those of Meisel – and other silent-film accompaniment practices, which are evidence of this longer heritage. That is not to say, however, that the close synchronization method was not without its detractors in the silent era, as some reviews of Meisel’s scores will confirm. Nonetheless, the

approach was popular and championed by Meisel as the way forward, the means of creating an accompaniment specific to one film rather than the general-purpose pot-pourri compilations.

Film-music discourse since the publication of *Composing for the Films* in 1947 has propagated the debate in classical film-theory concerning the primacy of the filmic illusion. Regarding the purpose of music in film,

the divide is cast in terms of a dichotomy between synchronization [parallelism] and counterpoint, or the degree of fit between music and the rest of the film . . . Synchronization . . . attempts to make a close fit between music and image. Advocates of this position suggest that synchronization . . . enhances the filmic illusion by reducing the autonomy of music. Counterpoint, on the other hand, involves a divergence between music and image . . . [since] music is necessarily nonidentical to the image track . . . Rather than concealing the difference between image and music, then, counterpoint theory suggests employing the difference as a productive tension.

. . . [In synchronous theory], music that mimics the image allows music to be integrated into the filmic world without challenging the discursive or narrative authority of the image.

. . . [S]uch classical accounts subordinate music in order to prevent it from projecting an independent narrative voice . . . [through] fear that an uncontrolled music might overtake and subvert the control of the central narrative.

(Buhler and Neumeyer 1994: 372, 379–80)

The traditional distinctions between parallelism and counterpoint have been shown to be overly simplistic. In practice, mickey-mousing – the furthest extreme of synchronous music – subverts the accepted image-music hierarchy, appearing ‘to conjure up the filmic content’ (Buhler and Neumeyer 1994: 379, n. 55) in the manner of a ‘perversely manipulative narrator’ (Gorbman 1987: 16). Rather than mutely aiding continuity and perpetuating the filmic illusion,

the more music mimics the succession of filmic images and strives to render the filmic logic of the cut in musical terms, the more music negates continuity and approaches the fragmented, discontinuous state of the images.

(Buhler and Neumeyer 1994: 381)

The dichotomy between parallelism and counterpoint in audio-visual theory stems from the famous Russian sound manifesto issued by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov in July 1928, which promoted non-coincidence as the ideal audio-visual relationship in sound film. The relationship between Meisel's scoring practices and counterpoint theory is discussed at several points within the thesis, particularly in Chapters 4 and 6.

Related to mickey-mousing is the idea of 'word-painting' in music, which dates back to at least the early sixteenth century, when textual ideas in sacred and secular music were illustrated or 'painted' with musical figures in order to represent and arouse the affections, drawing the listener into the dramatic presentation. A tradition of stock musical 'figures' developed in vocal music, analogous to the stock linguistic devices of Greek and Roman rhetorical practices. These figures continued to be used in instrumental works even after vocal music lost its predominance and were codified by theorists, mostly German, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries using terminology from Classical rhetoric. The compositional method is known as *Figurenlehre*, after an essay published by Arnold Schering in 1908 (Buelow 2001). Many of the figures have been collated by Dietrich Bartel (1997: Part Three, 167–438). Typically, the musical figures expressed words of emotion, words of motion and place, contrasts between darkness and light, human states, and human attributes or vices (Bartel 1997: 23–4). Claudia Bullerjahn (1996: 290) commented on the similarity between *Figurenlehre* and conventions in descriptive silent-film music, finding three figures particularly common: *anabasis* (ascent), *catabasis* (descent) and *kyklosis* (circular motion). To these can be added many others, including *abruptio* (sudden and unexpected break), *auxesis* or *incrementum* (successive repetitions of a musical phrase rising by step), *hypotyposis* (vivid musical representation of images), *interrogatio* (musical question), *pausa* (pause or rest), and *saltus duriusculus* (a dissonant leap to express harshness). Whereas Bartel (1997: 86, fn. 69) is adamant that *Figurenlehre* terminology should remain within Baroque practices, Peter

Williams is convinced that, '[t]he more one is alerted to the idea of *Figurenlehre*, the more the *figurae* can be seen as powerful undercurrents below the stream of music right into the 19th century and in some cases beyond' (Williams 1979: 476). Whilst accepting that within the Baroque period these musical figures cannot be separated from their original rhetorical purpose, it cannot be denied that the figures survived into the nineteenth century, especially wherever music was still conceived dramatically and particularly in genres now dismissed as lowbrow, such as melodrama and pantomime. These figures became the clichés of nineteenth-century stage music and were then assimilated into the language of early twentieth-century film accompaniment, another genre like baroque and classical opera where emotion belongs to the public rather than the private sphere. Hence its representational nature and why 'meaning' is often shamelessly worn on the outside, rather than being buried internally. What is an ascending scale to accompany Mickey Mouse up a flight of stairs, if not an *anabasis*? The topics of mimesis and word-painting have been contentious since at least the eighteenth century, when 'some writers regarded it as rather childish and even laughable' (Tarling 2005: 92). Similarly, Maurice Jaubert described the representation of coins falling on the ground and beer trickling down a drinker's throat in Steiner's score to *The Informer* as examples of childishness (Jaubert 1938: 108).

3 Meisel and the stage: An overview

The following discussion concentrates on Meisel's work for Piscator; Meisel's work for other stage directors can be found in a full list of his incidental music in Table 3.1. Meisel first met Piscator at meetings of the International Workers' Aid (in German the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* or IAH), an organization founded in August 1921 at the behest of Lenin to provide financial relief for those beset by famine in the Soviet Union (Piscator 1980: 83). A photo from 1921 depicts Piscator, Hilde Piscator (his first wife), Meisel and an unknown woman relaxing on the beach at Sylt, an island off the north German coast (reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 7). Their creative partnership began with two commissions from the KPD: the first was *Revue Roter Rummel* (variously translated as *Red Revue* or *Red Riot Revue*), an agitational revue for their 1924 election campaign, and the second *Trotz Alledem! (In Spite of Everything!)*, a grand political pageant to rally the masses at their first party congress in 1925 (Willett 1979: 2). Both productions were constructed from a series of loosely connected sketches. The *Red Revue* concerned the inevitable triumph of communism over all class injustices and was performed fourteen times in November 1924 to masses of workers in different parts of Berlin. Neither the text nor Meisel's music have survived, but contemporaneous reviews mention an overture of proletarian battle songs and the rousing communal singing of the *Internationale* at the end (Innes 1972: 44). Here is Piscator's own description of the incidental music within the revue:

The music had a particularly important function. And here I must point out that in Edmund Meisel . . . we had found a musician who knew what it was all about: the musical line had not only to illustrate and provide a background, it had also to pursue its own independent and conscious political line: music as a positive element in the drama. (Piscator 1980: 83)

The sketches in *Trotz Alledem!* presented 'the communist view of German history from the declaration of war to the death of [Karl] Liebknecht. There was no scenery,

and events took place on the ramps and niches of a terraced platform on the revolving stage, illustrated and counterpointed by old slides and newsreel clips' (see translator's notes in Piscator 1980: 85). Piscator described the dress rehearsal as 'utter chaos. Two hundred people ran around shouting at one another. Meisel, whom we had just converted to Negro music, was conducting a loud, incomprehensible, fiendish concert with a twenty-man band' (Piscator 1980: 96). The production was presented on 12 July 1925 at the Grosses Schauspielhaus, Berlin, a large auditorium with a capacity for several thousand. Precisely because of its popularity and tendentiousness, the production only received two performances. A photograph of Meisel conducting one of these performances is reproduced in Piscator's *Political Theatre* (1980: 110). Meisel's musical contributions to the KPD events in 1924 and 1925 are missing from his entry in the *Deutsches Musiker-Lexikon* (Müller 1929: 910–11). This omission was probably deliberate on Meisel's part and demonstrates a desire to promote himself beyond left-wing circles.

Piscator and Bertolt Brecht are regarded as the founders of modern 'epic theatre' in Germany. Piscator's 'epic' style evolved through his productions in the 1920s, as he began to incorporate and adapt twentieth-century materials from mass media and the industrial age to the stage, weaving dramatic action with projected still images, moving images, recordings, radio and public address systems. All this was combined with a neo-Baroque obsession (resulting in several bankruptcies) for elaborate, exposed stage machinery (cranes, conveyor belts, lifts, moving stairs, etc.); complex revolving, multi-level stage sets; and the use of narrators and choruses in the manner of Greek tragedy. Together, these elements were designed to revitalize the moribund, bourgeois, nineteenth-century stage traditions still current in German theatre, liberating drama from the temporal and spatial limitations of the stage and thus enabling it to comment on itself in an 'epic' manner (Innes 1972: 4). Film was one of the most important weapons in Piscator's arsenal and, from *Trotz Alledem!* onwards, he was one of the first German directors to use film systematically within his

stage productions (see Tode 2004 for an overview). Piscator made his reputation at the Berlin Volksbühne during 1924–7, before forming his own company at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz where Meisel was his music director (Willett 1979: 1–2; Müller 1929: 910). Meisel composed and often conducted the incidental music for nearly all the major productions during the 1927–8 season (*Hoppla, wir leben!*, *Rasputin*, *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* and *Der letzte Kaiser*). He also conducted the premiere of *Konjunktur* (composed by Weill) in April 1928 (Drew 1987: 192). Virtually nothing has survived of Meisel’s music for these productions, apart from the published sheet music for the title song from *Hoppla, wir leben!* and one song in manuscript from *Rasputin* (Sudendorf 1984: 92 and 97). The relevance of Meisel’s work for Piscator at the Theater am Nollendorf to the film scores written for Ruttman and Eisenstein during this period is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively.

Brecht was also formally a member of Piscator’s collective at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz and was particularly involved with the productions of *Rasputin*, *Konjunktur* and *Schwejk*. Prior to this, Meisel had composed incidental music for an adaptation of Brecht’s *Mann ist Mann* for Berlin Radio, broadcast in March 1927; his music was reused for a stage version the following year. Weill’s review of the broadcast described the play as being illustrated with music and sound effects (with Meisel possibly responsible for both) and that ‘Edmund Meisel’s music manipulated the “Man’s a Man” song in artful ways’ (Weill 1927-03-27; reproduced in Hinton and Schebera 2000: 349–50). There is no information regarding any direct collaboration between Brecht and Meisel over *Mann ist Mann*, since the productions were not directed by the playwright, but they certainly knew each other. A photo from 1927 (reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 10) shows Meisel, with an angry expression directed at Brecht, amongst a group in Brecht’s Spichernstraße apartment. Given the scant evidence of their working relationship, the sensationalist description of Meisel as a ‘Brecht collaborator’ (Bennett 2007) should be ignored.

3.1 Meisel's incidental music for stage and radio plays, 1924–1930

As composer			
Premiere date	Play	Director	Berlin venue
22 November 1924	<i>Revue Roter Rummel</i>	Piscator	Various outdoor areas
12 July 1925	<i>Trotz Alledem!</i>	Piscator	Grosses Schauspielhaus
3 December 1925	<i>Ramper</i>	Paul Henckels	Kammerspiele
4 September 1926	<i>Zweimal Oliver</i>	Viktor Barnowsky	Theater in der Königgrätzer Straße
11 September 1926	<i>Die Räuber</i>	Piscator	Staatliches Schauspielhaus
3 December 1926	<i>Hamlet</i>	Leopold Jessner	Staatliches Schauspielhaus
18 March 1927	<i>Mann ist Mann</i>	Alfred Braun	Radio play for Berliner Rundfunk
25 April 1927	<i>Anarchie in Sillian</i>	Alfred Braun	Radio play for Berliner Rundfunk
3 September 1927	<i>Hoppla, wir leben!</i>	Piscator	Theater am Nollendorfplatz
10 November 1927	<i>Rasputin, die Romanovs, der Krieg und das Volk, das gegen sie aufstand</i>	Piscator	Theater am Nollendorfplatz
4 January 1928	<i>Mann ist Mann</i>	Erich Engel	Theater am Bülowplatz
23 January 1928	<i>Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk</i>	Piscator	Theater am Nollendorfplatz
1 March 1928	<i>Singende Galgenvögel</i>	Ernst Lönner	Piscator Bühne am Lessingtheater
14 April 1928	<i>Der letzte Kaiser</i>	Karlheinz Martin	Theater am Nollendorfplatz
1 June 1928	<i>Der Feldherrenhügel</i>	Leopold Kramer	Theater am Nollendorfplatz
31 August 1930	<i>Des Kaisers Kulis</i>	Piscator	Gastspiel der Piscator-Bühne am Lessing-Theater
As conductor			
10 April 1928	<i>Konjunktur</i>	Piscator	Piscator Bühne am Lessingtheater

Sources: Hoffmann (1971: 68–9); Sudendorf (1984: 90–4)

Part Two

1926: From Revolution to Romanticism

4 *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin*: Harnessing the power of empathy

A new Reich Moving Picture Law (*Reichslichtspielgesetz*) came into force in Weimar Germany in May 1920, after which all films, together with their associated publicity material, had to be submitted for approval to one of the two film review boards (*Filmprüfstellen*) in Berlin and Munich. There was also an appellate film review board (*Filmoberprüfstelle*) in Berlin (Jelavich 2003: 64). These review boards could enforce cuts or ban films outright if they were considered ‘to endanger public order or safety, to offend religious sensibilities, to have a brutalizing or demoralizing effect, or to endanger Germany’s prestige or its relations with foreign states’ (Reich Moving Picture Law, cited in Kreimeier 1999: 65). Registration cards (*Zulassungskarten* or *Zensurkarten*) were issued for all approved films and details of recently examined films were published in various film trade newspapers. Many of the cards still survive in German archives and list information such as the cast and crew, film length, the number of reels, a brief description of content or a list of intertitles, and a list of censored scenes if necessary. Comprehensive details of all the censorship decisions for Meisel’s films have been collated in Appendix II.

A *Kontingentgesetz* (‘Quota Law’) had also been passed in 1920 to restrict the number of foreign (mostly American) films in Germany to fifteen per cent. Since this was impossible to maintain, the system was altered in 1925 and a new German film had to be distributed for every foreign film imported into Germany (Murray 1990: 60 and 248, n. 4). The IAH had been distributing Soviet documentaries and feature films in Germany since 1922, but the new law necessitated the establishment of an enterprise that would take over this distribution and produce *Kontingentfilme* (‘quota films’). The Prometheus film company, Berlin, had been founded in December 1925 specifically for this purpose.

When the rough cut of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*) was first shown at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, on 21 December 1925, the accompaniment consisted of music familiar to the theatre orchestra: 'a medley of tunes from Litolff's "Robespierre" overture, Beethoven's "Egmont" overture and Tchaikovsky's symphonic fantasia "Francesca da Rimini"' (Taylor 2000: 11). The film went on general release on 18 January 1926. Despite a degree of critical success, *Potemkin* was only screened for around a month, ultimately unable to compete with the popularity of *Robin Hood* (dir. Allan Dwan, 1922) and the dashing Douglas Fairbanks (Taylor 2000: 65).

The Russian Embassy in Berlin organized a private screening of *Potemkin* at the Grosses Schauspielhaus, Berlin, on 21 January 1926, where a young Russian student provided an accompaniment on the theatre organ (Pfeiffer 1980: 249). The event was part of a commemoration of Lenin's death; the invited audience included Richard Pfeiffer and Willi Münzenberg, two of the Prometheus directors. Soon after this private screening, Prometheus bought the negative and secured German distribution rights. Piel Jutzi (cameraman, film editor and, later, director) was given the task of editing Eisenstein's film into a shape that was both suitable for German audiences and the Berlin censors. Jutzi's alterations to *Potemkin* have been summarized most comprehensively by Thomas Tode (2003) and Enno Patalas (2005). Essentially, Jutzi reworked Eisenstein's carefully crafted five-act structure (made in the manner of a Greek tragedy) into six, softening the revolutionary tone by 'flattening out the drama into a chronology' and adding explanatory intertitles (Patalas 2005: 34). The extent to which Eisenstein may have personally influenced both the re-editing of his film for the German release and Meisel's score is unclear. Eisenstein and his colleague Eduard Tissé were allowed to visit Berlin, leaving Moscow by train on 18 March (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 64), ostensibly to glean technical knowledge from the Berlin film studios. Jutzi's first re-cut of *Potemkin* was submitted to the Berlin censors in March, under the title *Das Jahr 1905*.

(„*Panzerkreuzer Potemkin*“), before Eisenstein arrived. The censorship decision was delayed by an intervention from the War Ministry. Two senior officials, including General Hans von Seeckt, Army Chief of Staff, were given a private preview of *Potemkin* at the Ministry on 17 March (without music). As a result, both the War Ministry and the Reich Commissariat for the Supervision of Public Order made representations to the Berlin censors and the film was banned on 24 March, on the grounds that it was dangerous to public order and security (Taylor 2000: 99). After an appeal, Jutzi's *Potemkin* was finally approved on 10 April, subject to some further cuts (30 metres in total), which generally concerned removing or softening close-up shots of the brutality inflicted by mutineers against senior officers, and that of the Cossacks against the civilians of Odessa. When Prometheus subsequently screened *Potemkin* (without any accompaniment) at a trade show, only one cinema owner bravely offered to screen the film. The venue was not what they had wished for: the Apollo Theater in Friedrichstrasse, a former operetta theatre equipped for film screenings in the southern part of Berlin, set off the beaten track in a district with no night life. The date for the premiere was set for 29 April (Pfeiffer 1980: 254).

At some point before *Potemkin* was banned on 24 March, Prometheus had commissioned an original score from Meisel (Pfeiffer to Eisenstein, Berlin, 1 June 1926). Piscator had supposedly proposed Meisel's name to Maxim Gorky's wife, Maria Andreyeva, who worked for the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin and she, in turn, passed on the suggestion to Prometheus (Prox 1986: 31). Meisel's own account of how he received the commission, as later relayed to Oswald Blakeston [Blakiston] in London, is fundamentally different and rather more vivid:

[Meisel] had written an article attacking cinema music [see Chapter 2], complaining that the usual musical directors tried to fit music expressing one idea to scenes expressing another idea. A good film, he contended, was worthy of its own music.

Whereupon the firm exploiting 'Potemkin' in Germany summoned Meisel to their projection room, and he was swept off his feet by the superb

technique of Eisenstein. The censor very nearly spoilt everything by banning the picture. It had been decreed, however, that Meisel's entry into the film world should be itself dramatic. An urgent phone call : the censor had lifted the ban : in twelve days they would present the picture . . . Meisel would and could!

(Blakiston 1929-02-11)

Meisel has stated elsewhere that he composed his *Potemkin* score at great speed, 'within twelve days and nights' (Meisel 1927-04-01). In addition to the looming deadline, there was the constant threat that permission to screen the film would be revoked, making his labours in vain. Prometheus installed a projector in his house – 'it gave a picture the size of a postage stamp' (Blakiston 1929-02-11) – allowing Meisel to compose a score closely synchronized to the film. It is unlikely that Meisel was remunerated for his work. Whilst most of Berlin's radical arts community would eventually contribute to one Prometheus project or another, '[t]heir work usually went unpaid because of chronically lacking funds' (Horak 1981). Blakeston's interview suggests the highly plausible scenario that Meisel only commenced composing once the film had passed the censors, that is after 10 April. Meisel met with Eisenstein to discuss his score, an encounter discussed in Eisenstein's writings (see below) and later alluded to by the composer (Meisel 1928-01-26). There was probably only a small window of opportunity for this meeting to take place, since Eisenstein returned to Moscow sometime between 18 and 26 April, before *Potemkin* had its Berlin premiere (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 67). The Soviet ambassador, Nikolai Krestinsky, 'sent Eisenstein a telegram on April 27 asking him to return to Berlin by plane, but the flight was cancelled because of bad weather' (Bulgakowa 2001: 64). Eisenstein's alleged influence on Meisel's score, particularly the squadron encounter in the final reel, is discussed below.

Berlin premiere and reception

The exact number of musicians and instruments in Meisel's orchestra for the premiere of *Potemkin* is not known, but it has been suggested that Meisel only had a salon orchestra of between 16 and 18 players at his disposal (Mark Andreas 1986: 44). Pfeiffer (1980) has left a vivid account of the premiere, which he originally made in 1957, over thirty years after the event. Five hours before the deadline everything was thrown into jeopardy when government representatives suddenly turned up at the Apollo Theater – including Prime Minister Otto Braun – and demanded to be shown the film. The film was duly screened to the uninvited dignitaries, but without Meisel's music. There was still a real possibility that the film would be banned at the last moment. Due to other commitments, Otto Braun left the auditorium after the fourth act, but assured Paul Levi, acting lawyer for Prometheus, that the public screening would go ahead. Meisel resumed his dress rehearsal, insisting that the premiere be delayed by two hours. This proved impracticable, due to the crowds waiting to get into the Apollo. Pfeiffer recalled that the premiere had been due to start at 18:00, but was delayed by an hour to appease Meisel. An entrance ticket for the premiere¹ has 19:00 as the starting time, implying either that Meisel did not get the extra rehearsal time he requested or that the premiere started even later.

The premiere proved to be a phenomenal success and the Apollo Theater was subsequently sold out for all performances, attracting patrons from all walks of life. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford happened to be in Berlin at the time and requested a special screening, which took place in the afternoon of 6 May with Meisel conducting his music. Fairbanks was supposedly so impressed by Meisel's score that he invited the composer to Hollywood (Pfeiffer 1980: 259; *Die Rote Fahne* 1926-05-07). A few weeks later, Pfeiffer informed Eisenstein about the continued demand for his film:

¹ Schriftgutarchiv, Deutsche-Kinemathek, Berlin, document reference SDK3.U87.

Within a few days the film was already running in Berlin in twenty-five theatres, and after fourteen days we had forty-five copies in circulation. . . . In the meantime the number of copies has now risen to fifty, and the film is running today in almost all the major cities in Germany . . .

[The] composer Meisel has been engaged as conductor for the premiere performances in Mannheim, Leipzig [and] Danzig . . . All these theatres have expanded ensembles for these occasions, some up to forty men.

(Pfeiffer to Eisenstein, Berlin, 1 June 1926)

Meisel was presumably able to make some considerable earnings conducting his *Potemkin* music, spending over four weeks as guest conductor to packed houses in Mannheim (Pfeiffer 1980: 263). Meanwhile the campaign to have the film banned continued in the right-wing press and in government debates. The film was examined by the Berlin censors a total of nine times between March 1926 and March 1933, resulting in a series of censorship cuts and an outright ban on three occasions. Most of these decisions occurred in 1926. Ultimately the censorship interventions were counterproductive for the authorities, attracting ‘far more attention to *Battleship Potemkin* than it could have created by itself and with the marketing efforts of the tiny, inexperienced Prometheus’ (Murray 1990: 121).

The stirring effect Meisel’s score had on the audiences contributed greatly to the success of Eisenstein’s film. Press comments on the score generally praised the machine music generated by the percussion in the final act and also Meisel’s use of the Cossacks’ marching footsteps in the Odessa Steps massacre (for example, H. E. 1926-05-22). The comments of Friedrich Bethge, a German playwright and dramatist, are particularly interesting, because he had viewed *Potemkin* with two different accompaniments. On the first occasion, the film was accompanied by a pot-pourri of Mozart and Beethoven (the first movement of the latter’s fifth symphony). Bethge only realized why so much fuss had been made over *Potemkin* when, on the second occasion, he saw it with Meisel’s score. What had seemed banal when accompanied by Beethoven became vital with Meisel’s music:

When the engines in the encircled battleship pounded to full steam, when the music had painted and rhythmically shaped this pounding and groaning, only then did the intended breath-taking tension of the final act take form through the complete unity of the visual and tonal rhythm. (Bethge 1926-09-15)

A report in the German right-wing press declared Meisel's score to be the sole cause of the film's tendentiousness: 'A good deal of the effect [of *Potemkin*] is on account of the musical arrangement. There would immediately be no objections if the film were to be seen without the provocative music' (*Der Kinematograph* 1926-05-09). This opinion supposedly came straight from Gustav Stresemann, Germany's Foreign Minister (Sudendorf 1984: 18), and echoes sentiments in a letter from Stresemann to Otto Braun, criticising Braun's support of the *Potemkin* film:

If you personally, Mr Prime Minister, on the basis of a performance of the film have not endorsed the objections of the Reichskabinett, then perhaps it was because at this presentation the film was shown without music and furthermore the psychological impact only emerges when one considers how the film actually affects those who see it at performances.

(May 1926. Reproduced in Bernhard *et al.* 1932: 408)

Braun could not understand why the Reichskabinett were still causing such a fuss over a film which had been authorized by an appellate film review board appointed by the German Government. Even if Meisel's music had accompanied the unscheduled screening attended by Braun, the prime minister's opinion may not have been any different, since he left after Act IV (Pfeiffer 1980: 257). Stresemann may have been unaware that Braun had seen neither the massacre on the Odessa Steps nor the encounter with the Squadron, the two scenes which have the most memorable impact, both visually and musically.

Many commentators have stated that, at some point during the height of its notoriety in 1926, the *Potemkin* score was banned in Germany, because its provocative rhythms were considered to be *staatsgefährlich*, or dangerous to the State. The source of this information was Meisel himself, who, in an unpublished press release written early in 1928 and intended for the Moscow newspapers, stated:

After the reactionary press labelled my [*Potemkin*] music as subversive because of its impetuous rhythm, which matched the action, Minister Bolz in the Württemberg Landtag prohibited it as dangerous to the State [*staatsgefährlich*]. This, generally speaking, is the first time that political charges have been brought against a musical composition. (Translated in Marshall 1978: 125)

Meisel certainly repeated this story whilst in London (see Chapter 10), since it can be traced in publications associated with members of the Film Society. Over time, this myth mutated to encompass other mostly unnamed German cities and European countries:

[A]t Stuttgart, though the film itself was permitted, the music was forbidden as *staatsgefährlich!* ([1929]; The Film Society 1972: 131)

It is significant that several European countries which allowed . . . [*Potemkin*] itself to pass the censor forbade the music to be played. (London 1936: 93)

[A]necdotal apocrypha have accumulated about [*Potemkin*'s] effectiveness since its first performances. In several cities the movie passed the censors only with a stipulation that it be shown without Meisel's stirring and 'provocative' score. (Winter 1941: 151)

[Meisel's] musical score . . . contributed so enormously to the force of the film that in parts of Germany it was the music, not the film, that was banned as *staatsgefahrllich* . . . (Montagu 1968: 31)

You may know that the Municipality of Berlin banned the showing of 'Potemkin', but the ban was removed on condition that Meisel's music was not played with the film!

(Sidney Bernstein to Richard Oldenburg, London, 11 September 1973 in IM116)

[Meisel's score was] considered so politically inflammatory that it was banned after its Berlin premiere in 1926 and disappeared completely during World War II. (Merchant 1973)

I recall that when the town of Stuttgart banned the film, representations to the authorities to allow the film to be shown were made even from abroad, and in the end they agreed, provided that it was shown without the music, which they considered *staatsgefährlich* . . . (Bernstein 1975-10-23)

Is there any truth to these rumours? London's vague statement that 'several European countries . . . forbade the music to be played' seems improbable. Whilst Great Britain and France banned the film from being screened to the general public, there is no evidence to suggest that they did so on account of Meisel's music. London failed to take into account the genuine fear of rioting and mass uprising *Potemkin* generated in governments and film censorship boards throughout Europe during a time of great social upheaval. *Potemkin* had its German premiere in April 1926, just days before the General Strike in Britain; it was inconceivable that the British government and censorship authorities would have allowed the screening of a film which portrayed workers overthrowing their masters. Likewise, Sudendorf (1984: 18) found no evidence that a general ban was imposed on the music in Württemberg, as Meisel claimed, or elsewhere in Germany, but does not deny that a temporary ban on the music may have occurred in certain localities. Under special circumstances where the safety of the cinema audience could not be guaranteed (as in an actual or potential riot), local police were allowed to stop or prohibit screenings. This temporary police censorship was often exploited by local governments wishing to prevent the showing of a particular film, circumventing the federal decision by using a 'parallel censorship practice' (Loiperdinger 2004: 532). For example in June 1926, Bolz, the Interior Minister for Württemberg, petitioned the appellate film review board in Berlin to ban *Potemkin* throughout the Reich, or at least for the state of Württemberg; in the interim he instructed police in Stuttgart, the state capital, to ban the forthcoming screenings of *Potemkin* at the Palastlichtspiele, on the grounds of danger to public order (see documents 26a and 29 in Herlinghaus 1960: 290–1 and 294–5).

For a brief period from 12 July to 28 July 1926, there was another federal ban on *Potemkin*, but an estimated 1.5 million Germans had already seen the film by mid-June 1926, since at the height of *Potemkin* fever the film had been screened in around 180 Berlin theatres and at least 22 other major German cities (*Das 12 Uhr Blatt* 1926-

06-21). Crucially this report also stated that no disturbances of the peace had accompanied any of the screenings in the places listed, countering the false claims made in the southern states of Germany. There was also an unprecedented demand for the film to be screened with its original music, making Meisel's *Potemkin* score one of the most widely disseminated original scores for a silent film. Prometheus published Meisel's score in piano score and orchestral parts were made available for hire. The January 1927 edition of *Film-Ton-Kunst* commented on the pioneering effect the *Potemkin* score had wrought on so many music directors, galvanizing them to hire the original music rather than rely on their own tried and tested compilations. By the beginning of 1927, Meisel's score had allegedly been performed in 125 German towns, with additional performances in Holland, Switzerland, Norway, America and Argentina (*Film-Ton-Kunst* 1927-01-15). The subsequent edition of *Film-Ton-Kunst* contained a correction from Adolf Kühn, the enterprising music director at the Adler-Lichtspiele in Auerbach, Saxony:

Not every theatre that was sent music was able to perform it. I know myself of a case from one of the places listed where the music after inspection was not able to be played on account of the orchestra being too small and, at the end of the day, the complexity of the music. The notes in the margins of the score alone indicate that preferably 3 percussionists are required: small venues are glad to own even one percussionist who can play the notes perfectly.

On the other hand I find that the Adler-Lichtspiele is not in the list, yet it played the *Potemkin* music with an expanded orchestra, in the manner that all original music is played in these theatres. I am recollecting *Sumurun*, *Nibelungen*, *Rosenkavalier*, etc. (*Film-Ton-Kunst* 1927-02-15)

Dettke found hire statistics in *Film-Kurier* for two further German scores: Marc Roland's *Weltkrieg* (dir. Léo Lasko, 1927, in two parts), which was performed in 200 German cinemas of varying capacities, and Zeller's *Luther* (dir. Hans Kyser, 1928) which was performed in 107 German towns and abroad (Dettke 1995: 54).

Extant sources

For many decades Meisel's *Potemkin* score was considered to be lost, despite its wide dissemination and the numerous printed and manuscript parts made for hire purposes. Sidney Bernstein had allegedly sent an original score to MOMA during World War II, and asked its director to trace the whereabouts of the music in the early 1970s:

Through an underground movement we set up during the Nazi regime in Germany, we made secret efforts to get certain films out of Germany and we had a degree of success. We were also able to get out Edmund Meisel's music for Eisenstein's "The Battleship Potemkin" . . . [Do] you still have the Meisel original music score which I sent to the Museum . . . [and is] the report that some USA universities have copies of the manuscript . . . correct[?]

(Bernstein to Richard Oldenburg, London, 11 September 1973 in IM116)

There was no trace of this acquisition, but fortunately by that time Leyda had discovered both printed and manuscript sources for Meisel's *Potemkin* score in the Eisenstein archives, Moscow: a piano score published by Prometheus in 1926 (Meisel 1926); some sections from the piano score copied out in manuscript with handwritten remarks by Eisenstein; and a score and set of orchestral parts on manuscript paper for salon orchestra. Prometheus had sent the printed piano score to Eisenstein as a gift (Pfeiffer to Eisenstein, Berlin, 1 June 1926). The piano score is the most readily accessible resource, with copies available to researchers in several European film museums, notably Berlin and Frankfurt. Some of it has also been published in facsimile: Sudendorf (1984) reproduced the last ten pages (the whole of the final act) as an appendix to his monograph on the composer and two pages (14 and 20) appear in Houten (1992: 210–11).

As for the orchestral parts, Meisel may have taken these to Moscow in person, when he was invited to conduct his *Potemkin* score at a gala performance in November 1927, or had them prepared during his stay (discussed below in Chapter 8). Whatever their provenance, the parts appear to have been unused: Kleiner prepared the first reconstruction of Meisel's *Potemkin* score from a microfilm copy of

these parts and commented on their complete lack of markings (Heller 1984 [1977]: 39). Although I had no access to the surviving orchestral parts, I was able to view, albeit briefly, a copy of the salon score and miscellaneous handwritten extracts from the piano score in the possession of Alan Fearon. The salon score and handwritten extracts from the piano score were copied out in Moscow on Russian manuscript paper and by a Russian hand. This is evident from printed footnotes to Moscow printing houses on a few pages of the score and some of the handwritten extracts. There are also occasional words written in Cyrillic: for example, the word *partitura* (score) on the front page; the act titles within the score; and the word *kanonada* (cannonade) when the battleship fires on the buildings in Odessa in retaliation for the massacre. Moreover, the handwriting style for the Italian musical terms, instrument names and notation resembles, say, Shostakovich's handwriting in the 1920s, as in his score for *New Babylon* (dir. Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, 1929).

The salon score is arranged for flute/piccolo, B flat trumpet, trombone, harmonium, timpani, percussion and strings (without a viola part). It was standard practice in Europe and America for small cinema orchestras to dispense with the luxury of violas (Cooke 2008: 20), but the number of percussionists Meisel required (three) was entirely atypical. Occasional handwritten annotations in Dutch suggest that the score has been used in more recent performances. The composer and conductor Mark Andreas [Schlingensiepen], who completed a reconstruction of Meisel's score in 1986 (see below), has made the most detailed observations on the salon score:

Reckoning with a small body of strings, Meisel used the flute and the trumpet chiefly to reinforce the first violins while the trombones served to support the brass group. The harmonium did duty for the missing woodwind. . . .

Following the successful premiere, where Meisel conducted between 16 and 18 musicians (as suggested by the score), and the ensuing *Potemkin* boom in Germany, the chance arose of arranging the music for a much larger orchestra. Demonstrably, Meisel commanded over 40 musicians while appearing as a guest conductor in many towns [The piano score] contains various (if

sparse) instrumental indications (for example, piano, horn), which substantiate Meisel's bigger arrangement.

(Mark Andreas 1986: 44; translation adapted from Mark Andreas 1995: 12)

These observations suggest that the piano score was drawn up shortly after the premiere, since it indicates instruments not present in the salon score, in addition to some re-working of the harmony and figuration. The printed piano score shows signs of a hasty preparation with numerous glaringly obvious mistakes (missing clef changes, incorrect beamings, inconsistencies between repeated material, etc.). In addition to the few expression marks and instrumentation suggestions, there are 145 cues to the screen action (Patalas 2005: 40).

Print restorations and score reconstructions

In 1926, Goskino, the Soviet film company behind *Potemkin*, took the unusual step of selling the original negative to Prometheus, reserving 'the right to have further prints struck for its own requirements' (Patalas 2005: 33). One might assume that Eisenstein's 'original' film became gradually shorter through the various stages of German censorship and that all off-cuts were lost, but neither is the case. The German versions released in 1928 and 1930 (see Appendix II) contained shots that had been excised from the earlier versions censored in 1926. The shortened and altered negative of *Potemkin* was returned to Moscow either in the period of the Stalin–Hitler Pact or after the fall of Berlin at the end of World War II. MOMA and the BFI also hold *Potemkin* prints. The MOMA print was received around 1938/1939, whereas the BFI hold two different prints, imported in 1929 before the Film Society screening in November. These are the most important print sources. Various print restorations of *Potemkin* have been released since 1950 and Meisel's score has undergone several major reconstructions for orchestra since the early 1970s. These have been summarized in Table 4.1 (using statistics based on prints in German film archives), with more extensive information available in Appendix I.

4.1 Landmark restorations and reconstructions of *Potemkin*, 1945–2005

Year	Print details	Composer	Length	Running time
1950	Mosfilm Grigori Alexandrov	Score by Nikolai Kryukov, performed by the Orchestr Kinematografii and conducted by A. Gauk	1777 metres	65 minutes at 24 fps
1972	MOMA print (16mm)	Meisel, reconstructed by Arthur Kleiner	715 metres	66 minutes, variable fps
1976	'Jubilee' print Mosfilm Naum Kleiman Sergei Yutkevich	Musical direction: A. Kliot and A. Lapissov Compilation of extracts from symphonies by Dmitri Shostakovich (mostly recordings of Yevgeny Mravinsky conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra)	2013 metres	74 minutes at 24 fps
1986	Unknown print sourced from BFI or possibly 'Jubilee' print	Meisel, reconstructed by Alan Fearon		
1986	'Munich' print Enno Patalas	Meisel, reconstructed by Mark Andreas	1341 metres	74 minutes at 16 fps
2005	'Berlin' print Enno Patalas	Meisel, reconstructed by Helmut Imig	1388 metres	70 minutes at 18 fps
2005	'Jutzi' print Enno Patalas	Meisel, reconstructed by Helmut Imig		

Sources: Bohn (2005: 7); Heller (1984 [1977]: 41); Tode (2003: 37–9)

The relationships between the restored prints and score reconstructions are often quite complex. Tode (2003: 37–9) and Patalas (2005) have charted most of this history, Patalas also outlining the differences between the prints with regard to number of shots, content, style of intertitle, etc. In every reconstruction bar one, Meisel's score has had to be drastically altered to fit the chosen print, which all differ in length and order of content from the 1926 'Jutzi' version for which Meisel composed his score, and to which the surviving score materials relate.

Alexandrov, Eisenstein's assistant director on *Strike* (1925), *Potemkin* and the original version of *October*, supervised a sound version of *Potemkin* to commemorate the film's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1950. The new print converted the silent film to sound format via step-printing and a fixed projection speed of 24 fps. Further layers of Soviet censorship compounded the mutilations in the German negative and a special soundtrack was added. The soundtrack contained opening and closing narrations to explain the historical context, some sound effects, mass vocal interjections, and a score by Nikolai Kryukov. Kryukov was a prolific film composer and contemporary of Shostakovich, but his score was functional rather than expressive, lacking the frisson generated by Meisel's accompaniment and relying heavily on proletarian songs. At the end, Kryukov's score is reduced to near inaudibility in order to make way for the cheers of the victorious sailors and closing commentary. The selection of *Potemkin* as 'Best Film of All Time' at the 1958 Brussels World Fair, by a panel of eminent film historians, was based primarily on this sound-film version from the USSR. It is not apparent that Meisel's score was ever adapted to accompany this 1950 sound-film print, but there are comparisons to be made with Meisel's own sound-film version of *Potemkin* from 1930 (see Chapter 12).

The first reconstruction of Meisel's score was made in the USA by Kleiner, a Viennese composer and pianist, who became musical director for the MOMA Film Library in 1939. For nearly thirty years he accompanied silent-film programmes

twice daily, receiving regular invitations to accompany silent-film screenings at major cities throughout America and at international film festivals. He had been searching for Meisel's *Potemkin* score for some years when, in the early 1970s, Leyda provided him with a microfilm copy of the orchestral parts in the Eisenstein archives (Merchant 1973). Kleiner had no access to the piano score for his reconstruction and had to work out most of the cues himself. He spent about two years preparing his score, extending the microfilm materials through repetition in order to fit the MOMA print whilst maintaining its salon-orchestra instrumentation (Heller 1984 [1977]: 39). Kleiner recalled that his orchestra also contained violas, but these are not present on the first page of his score (Kleiner 2011), nor in the salon orchestra scoring preserved in the Eisenstein Archive, discussed above. When it was ready, fourteen musicians recorded Kleiner's reconstruction in one day at a television school in Washington. Kleiner used a pre-prepared print running mostly at 20 fps, with some scenes 'tweaked' to 16–18 fps (Heller 1984 [1977]: 41). By allowing for the variable speeds at which silent films were both filmed and projected, Kleiner's version was more 'historically informed' than the 1950 Soviet print which had forced Eisenstein's silent film into the 24 fps strait-jacket of sound film. Kleiner's reconstruction of *Potemkin* was produced by KCET TV in Los Angeles and broadcast to great acclaim in the PBS 'Film Odyssey' series on 24 March 1972, and thereafter throughout the USA and Canada during 1972–3. Subsequently Contemporary Films, London, bought the UK rights and it was screened by the BBC on 6 December 1974 (see Appendix I).

In the 1970s, film historians were beginning to regard films as unalterable texts. Hence the second Soviet restoration of *Potemkin* released in 1976 was the first real attempt to recreate a print which was nearer to Eisenstein's original conception, augmenting the materials in the Russian archives with shots from the MOMA print. This 'Jubilee' version was supervised by Sergei Yutkevich – a founding member of FEKS (the Factory of the Eccentric Actor, 1921) and one of the few remaining film directors from the 1920s – with advice from the Eisenstein scholar Naum Kleiman.

Again the film was stretched through step-printing and had a fixed projection speed of 24 fps. This time the score was posthumously compiled from extended extracts taken from recordings of Shostakovich's symphonies (Nos. 4, 5, 8, 10 and 11) performed by Yevgeny Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. Many video and DVD releases prior to 2007 contain this 1976 print combined with the Shostakovich score. In theatrical releases in Europe it is sometimes screened as a silent film with the composite score played live.

In 1986 the British conductor Alan Fearon reconstructed Meisel's *Potemkin* score at the request of the Hets Brabant Orkest, Eindhoven. This reconstruction is not mentioned in German texts and Prox even attempted to prevent the reconstruction from going ahead, due to another reconstruction of the score happening concurrently in Germany.¹ The Dutch silent-film and film-music historian Theodore van Houten provided the musical materials for Fearon's reconstruction. Leonid Trauberg, another co-founder of FEKS, had brought Houten copies of the piano score, orchestral parts and salon score to *Potemkin* in the early 1980s, whilst visiting Holland for Houten's revival of *New Babylon* with its original score by Shostakovich (Houten 1992: preface and 208). Whilst Christie (1987: 3) stated that the 'Jubilee' print was the basis for the reconstruction, Fearon recalled that one of the BFI prints had been used.² The Dutch orchestra had hoped to play *Potemkin* directly from the salon score, but Fearon regarded the arrangement as being too thin in its texture and essentially incomplete. As a result, he expanded the salon score with additional wind and brass parts, restructuring the string parts to include violas and creating a piano part based on the printed piano score (Fearon 1987). This was ultimately a question of changing taste, since a reconstruction of the salon-orchestra arrangement would have been a more authentic reflection of the score as experienced in many German venues during 1926. The Het Brabants Orkest gave the first performance of Fearon's reconstruction

¹ Alan Fearon, in conversation with the author, March 2009.

² Alan Fearon, in conversation with the author, March 2009. The BFI also hold a copy of the MOMA print.

in 1986 and there were further performances in the UK during 1987. Fearon's reconstruction is available for hire from the Het Brabants Orkest and is still occasionally performed: for example, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Ilan Volkov, staged a live performance of *Potemkin* on 27 September 2009 as part of Glasgow's Merchant City Festival.

Also in 1986, the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, Frankfurt, asked Patalas, then head of the Filmmuseum München, to provide a print to be shown with Meisel's score. As a result, Patalas made the first of two attempts to recreate Eisenstein's elusive original intentions, re-cutting a Russian Gosfilmofond print with material inserted from the MOMA and BFI prints. This so-called 'Munich' print was 'a compromise between Eisenstein and Jutzi: an Eisensteinian five-act structure with occasional concessions to the Meisel score' (Patalas 2005: 37). Meisel's piano score was reconstructed by Mark Andreas, arranged for a full complement of strings, wind, brass and four percussionists: forty-eight players in total (Mark Andreas 1986: 44). Mark Andreas also recorded his reconstruction with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana for broadcast on Schweizer Fernsehen and Bayerischer Rundfunk in 1986; a further recording was made in 1990 and released on CD in 1995 (edel 0029062EDL). Since his retirement, Patalas has completed a second restoration for the Filmmuseum Berlin, which received its premiere at the 2005 Berlinale, this time with Meisel's score reconstructed by Helmut Imig and performed by forty-five members of the Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg (Patalas 2005: 40). This latest 'Berlin' print is the most complete available, with all its credits and intertitles faithfully restored (in Russian) according to content, style and duration. Both Mark Andreas and Imig deliberately chose to re-orchestrate anew directly from the piano score, rather than expanding the salon score, extending Meisel's material through repetition or pastiche to fit the new prints (Mark Andreas 1986; Imig 2005: 15).

Whereas the *Potemkin* press file in the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt, contains a handful of positive reviews for the tour of the Patalas/Mark Andreas

reconstruction in 1986, all praising the symbiosis between film and music (see, for example, Lamerz 1986-09-24), reactions to the more recent Patalas/Imig reconstruction were more mixed. A Frankfurt review questioned the need for yet another expensive restoration, which yielded relatively few new shots compared with the 1986 'Munich' print, forced Meisel's score to be radically altered yet again, and used larger instrumental forces than the composer had originally intended. The reviewer condemned the restoration as an expensive folly at a time when German film archives are struggling to find money to reconstruct neglected German films (Kothenschulte 2005-02-14). Surprisingly, the latest Patalas print (length 1388 metres, see Bohn 2005: 7) is shorter than the Berlin premiere version from April 1926 and any of the subsequent German releases Meisel would have encountered, despite Imig's statement to the contrary (Imig 2005: 15). Nevertheless, certain sections of Meisel's score still had to be lengthened to fit Eisenstein's original organization of the material, rather than Jutzi's edit for the German market. In his analysis of the leitmotifs in *Potemkin*, discussed below, Fabich included some 'march' themes which he acknowledged were loose associations of individual bars recurring in different combinations and variants to form the general-purpose fabric of the score (Fabich 1993: 247–51). The interchangeability of this martial material has been a great boon for those who have reconstructed the score, allowing licence to repeat combinations and stretch the material to fit between particular points of synchronization.

The reconstructions by Kleiner, Mark Andreas and Imig have all been released commercially in VHS and DVD formats. A selection of these releases is included in the Filmography (Appendix VI). There are at least two DVD releases of the Patalas/Imig reconstruction for the 2005 Berlinale: one with German subtitles (Transit Classics – Deluxe Edition 86970099149, 2007) and another with newly translated English intertitles and subtitles (Kino International; K558, 2007). For the recording, Imig's orchestra was expanded to fifty-five players (Patalas 2005: 40). The DVDs also contain an insightful documentary film, *Dem Panzerkreuzer*

Potemkin auf der Spur (Tracing the Battleship Potemkin) by Artem Demenok (2007), with contributions from Patalas, Kleiman and Imig. Whilst these DVDs credit Imig's reconstruction of the score, earlier DVD and VHS releases generally fail to identify the reconstruction used or the orchestral forces employed. The Mark Andreas reconstruction can be identified by comparison with his CD recording of *Potemkin*, whilst the commercial releases in VHS format by Contemporary Films all contain the Kleiner reconstruction combined with the MOMA print. DVD releases prior to 2005 tend to contain the 'Jubilee print', typically with the compilation of Shostakovich extracts, although one enterprising French DVD (Films sans Frontières EDV 229, 2002) allows selection of all three scores (the Shostakovich compilation, Kryukov's score, or Meisel's score as reconstructed by Mark Andreas), somehow matched against the same 1976 'Jubilee' print designed to fit only the Shostakovich compilation! As part of the restoration work for the Filmmuseum Berlin, Patalas has also digitally recreated the first 'Weimar' or 'Jutzi' film print, synchronized with a truer rendering of Meisel's score (that is, one with minimal tampering), recorded by thirty players from the Babelsberg Orchestra under Imig's baton (Patalas 2005: 40). Such a reduction in players is more in keeping with the forces Meisel had at his disposal in April 1926. The result is not yet commercially available, but is hopefully forthcoming.

Analysis

The *Potemkin* piano score has already been analysed by Fabich (1993: 237–76), alongside other original film scores composed between 1908 and 1929 by Saint-Saëns, Weiss, Mascagni, Huppertz, Satie, Jaubert and Shostakovich. Fabich's analysis cross-referenced the *Potemkin* piano score with the 'Munich' print restoration from 1986. The following discussion will build on Fabich's detailed

groundwork rather than replicate it, using the Patalas/Imig reconstruction (2005) as a basis.

Leitmotifs

The score begins with the briefest of overtures: a four-bar rising fanfare, termed the ‘Rebellion’ motif in Figure 4.1. The fanfare is underpinned by an augmented triad; this simple chromatic distortion creates an immediate sense of heightened tension and expectation. As the fanfare reaches its highest point, a quotation from ‘La Marseillaise’ is heard in the bass-line, also chromatically distorted (see Figure 4.1, bar 4). By the 1920s, ‘La Marseillaise’ was already a well established cliché in silent-film music for moments of popular uprising: ‘[i]n all silent films, in which a Revolution occurred, whether French, Russian, Japanese or otherwise, the Marseillaise was played. Revolution is Revolution . . .’ (Kleiner, interviewed by Heller 1984 [1977]: 41). Meisel’s opening fanfare recurs throughout the score at moments associated with the increasing upsurge of revolutionary fervour. Fabich (1993: 245) suggested that the theme’s syncopations and triplet rhythms over a regular bass are reminiscent of a Scott Joplin piano rag, despite the lack of either the prominent syncopation over the centre of the bar or the wide left-hand leaps characteristic of ragtime. Such a description is indicative of attempts to find spurious jazz elements in Meisel’s music. Where the composer does use jazz – as in *Berlin*, *Der blaue Expresß* and the surviving fragment for *Stürme über dem Montblanc* (dir. Arnold Fanck, 1930) – it tends to have a diegetic motivation and be at least authentic in style if not a direct borrowing.

4.1 Overture and opening of Act I (*Potemkin*, PS 1)

Vorspiel

Vivace [Rebellion' motif]

ff *ff ritard.* *longa*
Pos.

Paukenwirbel p bis Titel: Die schwere russische Niederlage

Erbitterung m. allen Schichten
des Volkes

(leises Grollen) *f* *fz* *gliss.*

8^{va} Sturmpeitsche (1. Welle)
(Becken m. Holzschlägel) (Sirene)

(8) (2. u. 3. Welle) *fz* *f* *fz* *f* *p*
(Sirene) (Schiffsbild)

Dunkel A breit a tempo

Elsewhere, Meisel's motivic material is remarkably brief, tends not to recur very often (due to Eisenstein's direction) and fits the action too closely to be considered a mere label. Meisel's motifs generally correspond to visual motifs given prominence and symbolic significance through Eisenstein's montage process and, crucially, closeups:

[T]he closeup provides a tactile, sensuous impression of objects. However, in isolating them, to some extent it turns them into symbols: the object becomes the living representation of the concept which it evokes, an analogon in its pure state. The closeup may be said to be more abstract at the intellectual level the more its content is perceived *by the senses*. Nothing is more concrete than what it *shows*, but nothing is more abstract than what it *implies*. . . . The object (which becomes to some extent 'interiorized') is *experienced* and *felt* . . .

(Mitry 2000: 130–31; original emphases)

Whilst Eisenstein would take the symbolism of visual motifs to its furthest extremes in *October* through intellectual montage (see Chapter 8), *Potemkin* also has a web of visual motifs. The motions inherent to these visual motifs are significant, since they act as metaphors for emotion and enforce the inexorable revolutionary spirit of the diegesis:

Like the waves that crash on shore in the opening shots, rebellion steadily gathers force, spreading from the agitators to a faction of the crew, to the entire crew, to all sectors of the populace of Odessa, and finally to the tsarist navy. . . .

A shot of boiling soup is followed by shots of sailors angry about the rotten meat, and a title tells us that the men's rage 'overflowed' all bounds. . . .

Across the entire film we find the same detailed reworking of motifs. Meat hangs, mess tables hang, and eventually men and eyeglasses hang. . . .

Smirnov is another motivic knot. After he confronts Vakulinchuk over the meat, the two are made parallel. Smirnov is thrown overboard; Vakulinchuk tumbles over. Smirnov clutches at ropes in resisting the mutineers; Vakulinchuk's body is snagged by ropes from the winch. And when Smirnov is flung overboard, his pince-nez is shown dangling from the rigging . . .

Integral to *Potemkin's* conception of 'heroic realism', then, is a core of realistically motivated elements—eyes, eyeglasses, meat, worms, dangling objects and so on—that can radiate into a network of emotional and thematic implications. Instead of creating isolated, posterlike 'attractions', Eisenstein assumes that ever-expanding metaphorical fields will stimulate complex emotional associations in the spectator. (Bordwell 2005: 63, 69, 71–2)

Meisel's scoring methodology was anticipated in his description of an imagined accompaniment to *Faust*, where he stated that 'the flame from which the spirit steps must be heard to strike upwards' (E. M. 1925-10-10). Accordingly, Meisel replicates the motions in Eisenstein's visual motifs through often crude isomorphic and iconic relationships with the images, in the manner of word-painting. Scott Curtis discussed isomorphic and iconic uses of sound in his analysis of audio-visual relationships in Warner Bros. cartoons. Isomorphic relations are those where sound and image have the same 'shape' with regard to rhythm and movement, whereas 'iconic relations pertain to analogous relationships between visual events and the timbre, volume, pitch, and tone of the accompanying sound' (Curtis 1992: 201–2). Typical examples

of the latter in Warner Bros. cartoons include moments where the orchestra provides non-realistic sound effects, such as a cymbal crash when one character slaps another on the head, or highness and lowness in pitch matching peaks and valleys in a mountain range. Whilst Curtis defined his terminology for a genre where the images are often edited to fit the music rather than the other way round, the terms isomorphic and iconic – which are not mutually exclusive – are quintessential for describing Meisel’s scoring practices. Examples of primarily isomorphic sound in *Potemkin* include Meisel’s motifs for the maggots (Figure 4.2 at ‘O’), the boiling soup (Figure 4.3), and the mess tables (Figure 4.4); these motifs literally wriggle, bubble and sway via oscillating chromatic movement. In a more abstract fashion, the upward trajectory in both the rising arpeggio of the ‘Rebellion’ motif and the rapid upward *glissandi* for the waves in the opening scene embody the initial fomenting rage and upsurge in revolutionary fervour (see Figure 4.1, opening and bars 7–9). The string clusters in an extreme upper register are a good example of iconic sound, replicating the bodies hanging from the masts, as envisaged by the sailors after Commander Golikoff states the fate of all those who refuse to eat the borscht (Figure 4.5).

Meisel emphasises visual motion and trajectory by creating distinctive sonic shapes even where little or no sound would normally be emitted. Whilst we expect waves to surge and crash (see the siren *glissandi* and *sforzando* tremolos in bars 7–9 of Figure 4.1), the audience’s perception of much smaller scale, inaudible motions are also heightened through sound. Examples of the latter include the squirming maggots (Figure 4.2 at ‘O’) and the ‘heaving’ shoulders of the sailor struck by the boatswain (see rehearsal mark ‘E’ in Figure 4.9, below, in discussion of sound effects). Meisel’s motifs function simultaneously as thematic identifiers to be repeated if required, as quasi sound effects, and as generators of emotion (through dissonance, shock, etc.). This makes them less easy to distinguish from more traditional sound effects.

4.2 'Smirnov', 'Pince-nez' and 'Maggots' motifs (*Potemkin*, Act I: PS 6)

N Der Schiffsarzt Smirnow

Der Schiffsarzt Smirnow

p

Handwritten notes: *b*, *ce*, *bce*, *bce*, *ce*

O (gest. Trp.)

ten.

tranquillo

Würmer kriechen

ten.

f

p *lento*

ten.

„Es kriecht von selbst über Bord“

ten.

f *a tempo*

p

f

etc.

8^{va}

4.3 ‘Soup’ motif (*Potemkin*, Act I: PS 9)

Musical score for the 'Soup' motif. The score is in common time (C) and consists of two staves. The upper staff is for the piano, marked with a box containing 'X' and 'Suppe' above it. The piano part features a series of sixteenth-note chords, with the number '6' written above the first four measures. The lower staff is for the flute, marked 'Fl. Triangel' and 'p a tempo'. The flute part consists of a single melodic line with a slur over the first four measures.

4.4 ‘Swaying mess tables’ motif (*Potemkin*, Act I: PS 11)

Musical score for the 'Swaying mess tables' motif. The score is in 4/8 time and consists of two staves. The upper staff is for the piano, marked 'Schaukeln . . .' and 'lento'. The piano part features a series of chords, with the number '6' written above the first measure. The lower staff is for the piano, marked 'p wiederh. ad lib'. The piano part consists of a single melodic line with a slur over the first four measures.

4.5 ‘Dangling bodies’ motif (*Potemkin*, Act II: PS 15–16)

Musical score for the 'Dangling bodies' motif. The score is in common time (C) and consists of two staves. The upper staff is for the piano, marked with a box containing '8va' and '(Mastbaum)'. The piano part features a series of chords, with the number '8va' written above the first measure. The lower staff is for the piano, marked '(Mastbaum)'. The piano part consists of a single melodic line with a slur over the first four measures.

Most of Eisenstein’s visual motifs concern movement within a static camera shot.

Similarly Meisel’s sonic tags have internal motion but are isolated, that is they do not necessarily flow with any musical logic into what follows, but are juxtaposed.

Musical logic is sacrificed to the requirements of the visual detail. Many motifs are either heard only once (the bubbling soup and the swaying mess tables) or are localized within a few related scenes. For example, the three short motifs for the scene regarding the maggot-infested meat (see Figure 4.2) are heard in alternation to follow Eisenstein’s changing shots (as in the ‘Jutzi’ version and not the latest Patalas print). The scene begins with a two-bar spiky caricature as Dr Smirnov enters (first two bars at rehearsal mark ‘N’). This is followed by two bars for the close-up of his

face wearing his pince-nez doubled up over one eye. This ‘Pince-nez’ motif is then repeated in conjunction with the writhing ‘Maggots’ motif (rehearsal mark ‘O’) as Dr Smirnov gazes through his pince-nez at the wriggling maggots. Thereafter, snatches of Dr Smirnov’s motif alternate with that of the maggots until an extended shot of the maggots wriggling in close-up. There is some literal magnification as the ‘Maggots’ motif ascends through a rising sequence and its parallel minor sevenths expand to major ninths (eight bars after rehearsal mark ‘O’). These three motifs return when Smirnov is thrown overboard during the mutiny, the ‘Pince-nez’ motif rhythmically diminished as his pince-nez is seen dangling from the rigging (Figure 4.6).

4.6 ‘Dangling pince-nez’ (*Potemkin*, Act III: PS 23)



Writing in the 1930s, Eisenstein recalled a meeting in 1925 at which the music to accompany the Moscow premiere of *Potemkin* was discussed:

The late L. Sabaneyev³ protested furiously at being required to select (or write) music for that film. ‘How am I supposed to illustrate . . . *maggots* in sound! It’s something quite unworthy of music!’ He failed to see the essential point: that it was neither the maggots nor the rotten meat that were important in themselves, but that quite apart from being a minor, factual, historical detail, they represented above all a symbolic image that would bring home to the audience the social oppression of the masses under tsarism! And surely *that* was a noble and most rewarding theme for any composer!

(Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 250; original emphasis)

Eisenstein, although he had heard Meisel’s score for *Potemkin* at the Film Society during his visit to London in 1929 (see Chapter 10), made no reference to Meisel’s

³If this is the same Sabaneyev, Russian musicologist, music critic and composer, who wrote *Music for the Films* (1935), then Eisenstein was mistaken about his death; Sabaneyev died in 1968.

thematic treatment of the maggots, which promotes precisely the symbolism the director desired.

Some may dismiss the aural duplication of visual detail as redundant, but one perceptive British film critic, William Hunter, who had attended performances of Meisel's scores for *Potemkin*, *October*, *Berlin* and *Der blaue Expreß* at the Film Society, London, said that

To consider [Meisel's scores] as 'music' is completely to misunderstand their purpose. Occasionally, indeed, there is a musical theme . . . [but these] scores are more accurately described as a comment on the film, and a component part of it, a fitting aural symbolism, harmonising rhythmically and emotionally with the sequence of images which they reinforce. When they are onomatopoeic – the march down the steps in *Potemkin*, or the noise of the battleship's engines as it goes into action . . . – they are not an imitation of the sound so much as a symbolism of it, and reinforce, in a manner which a musical accompaniment . . . or the actual noises could not do, the emotional and intellectual context in which they are found Meisel's 'music' is rather 'visual sound' – and extremely difficult to define. (Hunter 1932: 52–3 and fn. *)

Meisel's score emphasizes many of the visual details (for instance, the recurring motif of 'dangling' objects) highlighted in subsequent analyses of the film, including those by the director. This suggests that either Meisel was exceptionally perceptive and had a natural instinct for Eisenstein's symbolism, or the director brought the salient visual details to his attention during their brief encounter in Berlin and helped to mould Meisel's style.

Because Eisenstein himself drew attention to his collaboration with Meisel over *Potemkin* as his first attempt at a sound film (discussed below), commentators have attempted to analyse Meisel's score according to the notion, inherent in the later sound manifesto issued by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov in July 1928, that a film's audio-visual relationship should be one of non-coincidence. Here is an excerpt from its first English translation, prepared by Montagu:

The first experiments with sound must be directed towards its pronounced non-coincidence with the visual images.

This method of attack only will produce the requisite sensation, which will lead in course of time to the creation of a *new orchestral counterpoint* of sight-images and sound-images. (Eisenstein *et al.* 1928-10: 12)

Eisenstein's later published writings and practice regarding audio-visual counterpoint often appear to be directly at odds with the principles of his own sound manifesto. One particular example is his controversial analysis of twelve shots from *Nevsky* published in *The Film Sense* (1942), which 'revolves entirely around the demonstration of . . . cross-media isomorphism' (Cook 1998: 62). This analysis shows a clear parallelism between the left-to-right motion of the music and a left-to-right reading of the individual frames, famously derided by Adorno and Eisler as a 'similarity between the *notation* of the music and the [picture] sequence . . . [which] cannot be perceived directly, and for that reason cannot fulfil a dramatic function' (Adorno and Eisler 1994 [1947]: 153). Cook has countered this critique, stating that

this objection misses the mark; music is experienced through time, and a rising arpeggio is perceived as 'rising' so to that extent the left-to-right notational representation is perfectly true to experience. . . .

Eisenstein makes it clear in *The Film Sense* that he thinks of pictorial composition very much along the lines of the classical painterly tradition, one of the aims of which was to guide the viewer's eye along predetermined routes. . . . Seen this way, the visual composition of a shot . . . inevitably involves relations of before and after, and if this idea seem unfamiliar today, it is perhaps merely a measure of the extent to which film theory has subordinated principles of visual composition to issues of narrativity. (Cook 1998: 58–60)

Eisenstein's fascination for the isomorphic and iconic aspects of the audio-visual relationship in Mickey Mouse cartoons (discussed further in relation to the director's sound notes for *The General Line* in Chapter 10) should also be evaluated through Cook's standpoint on the *Nevsky* analysis. For Eisenstein, the 'link between music and picture lies in the "inner movement" which they both embody', a movement that expresses both motion and emotion (Cook 1998: 61). Eisenstein stressed that his

Nevsky analysis was not a general principle for all film, but only applied to certain sequences composed in this way. However the method of analysis is relevant to many sections of *Potemkin* and *October*, and to all of Ruttmann's *Berlin*, because they were composed with a 'painterly eye' and Meisel typically matched the visual curves in his scores. According to most interpretations of the sound manifesto, Meisel's reliance on apparent audio-visual coincidence immediately distinguishes him as a lesser composer. Yet, whilst the resultant audio-visual relationship depends on diegetic synchronicity, it is still fundamentally an example of non-coincidence. This is because the sound emitted either does not match the expected sound or sound is emitted when no sound would be expected (for example Meisel's motifs for the maggots, Dr. Smirnov's pince-nez and the bubbling soup). I would suggest that the interpretation of the Russian sound manifesto is widened to embrace Meisel's approach as a form of counterpoint; this topic is discussed further in relation to *Der heilige Berg*.

Ostinati: The Odessa Steps massacre and the squadron encounter

Meisel employed simple rhythmic ostinati for the two most famous scenes in the film: the massacre on the Odessa Steps and the encounter between *Potemkin* and the imperial squadron. Eisenstein significantly distorts historical events in these key scenes for greater visual and dramatic effect. The real crowd that gathered during the daytime to see the body of Vakulinchuk and the *Potemkin* turned into a drunk and unruly mob, looting and burning warehouses. The massacre happened in the evening after the authorities sealed off all exits and Cossacks descended the steps, firing on anyone trying to flee upwards (Bascomb 2007: 131–5). Eisenstein inverted many of these elements, 'stag[ing] the attack in the daytime with the innocent and unsuspecting people in a festive mood – descending the stairs, rather than trying to flee up them – and falling suddenly victim to the relentlessly advancing, machinelike Cossacks' (Gerould 1989: 176). Meisel's music matches the function and trajectory

of Eisenstein's editing through a thunderous cacophony consisting of a relentless marching beat in the percussion and lower brass (alternating between D minor and D flat major triads) for the omnipresent Cossacks and rapid descending chromatic scales for the downward stream of fleeing citizens. Whilst the images of the Cossacks' boots may be used to generate the conductor's initial tempo, there is no consistent audio-visual synchronization in this scene, although one may be perceived. Moreover, whilst the marching rhythm is present throughout most of the scene, the actual marching feet are not. The marching motif is not unique to the Cossacks. Fabich has labelled this motif 'marcia-II-ostinato' and has identified that it occurs whenever the imperial forces exhibit their brutality, which also includes the sailors and officers loyal to Golikoff before and during the mutiny, and the squadron advancing on the mutinous ship (Fabich 1993: 249–50).

In June 1905, the real *Potemkin* passed through the squadron of five battleships twice, in an attempt to convince the crews from the other ships to overthrow their officers and join in the mutiny (Bascomb 2007: 182–4). The battleship makes only one triumphant pass in the film, but it is the suspense-laden finale leading up to this victory that is under consideration here. Soon after the order to 'Clear the decks!' ('Klar zum gefecht!'), Meisel introduces a dotted march rhythm to accompany images of the engine room and clanking pistons. This is marked as *Maschinenrhythmus* in the piano score (see Figure 4.7, four bars after rehearsal mark 'J'). As with the harmony underpinning the 'Rebellion' theme (reprised in Figure 4.7, bars 2–5), the expected tonic and dominant alternation is chromatically distorted (this time through diminution). Meisel's 'machine music' appears intermittently at first, whenever the engine room is shown, but later forms a continuous background. Shortly after the command for 'Full steam ahead!' ('Volldampf voraus!') there is a forty-bar section in which the dotted march rhythm begins to migrate upwards by chromatic steps (see letter 'Q' in Figure 4.8).

4.7 'Clear the decks for action!' (*Potemkin*, Act VI: PS 45–6)

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system is in 3/4 time, marked *ff*, and includes the text „Klar zum gefecht!“ and a boxed 'Rebellion' motif. The second system is marked 'J'. The third system is marked 'Maschinenrhythmus'. The fourth system is marked 'K', 'ad libitum', and 'Trp.', and includes a 'Signalpfeife' part. The score features various musical notations including triplets, dynamic markings, and articulation marks.

Initially, the tempo matches the onscreen action of the engine pistons. In a real-life situation, a ship's pistons would operate at a constant tempo, volume and 'pitch' once maximum speed had been reached and maintained. Meisel changes all three of these parameters in his score. The section from letter 'Q' is repeated twice, each time with an increase in tempo and volume, the latter achieved through additional brass instruments. The result is a seemingly inexorable rising sequence lasting several minutes, which only stops once it is clear that the squadron will not be firing on the mutineers. In the salon score at rehearsal mark 'Q', the percussionists and harmonium hammer out the same eight quavers (alternating between D and A) for the entire sequence, whilst the rest of the orchestra provide the dotted march rhythm or emphasize the chromatic steps. The texture is interrupted by occasional trumpet fanfares to highlight intertitles, images of flags, the rising cannons, etc.

4.8 Full steam ahead! (Potemkin, Act VI: PS 47–8)

Volldampf voraus! Potemkin stellt sich zum Kampf

immer schneller
ad lib. stärker u. schneller
ff
(Im Rhythmus den Maschinen)

(Trp)

Ab hier Tamtam m. Holzschlägeln,
 Pauken, gr. Tr. alle 8 Achtel schlagen,
 dazu auf 1 Beckenschlag mf.

{ alles allmählich steigern bis zum Finale (X) }

6

8^{va}

(Wellen)

gliss.

8^{va}

gliss.

Maschinenrhythmus

Holt heraus, was die Maschinen leisten!

ff lunga
ad libit.

ff (Dazu das angegebene Maschinengeräusch)

8^{va} u.s.w.

8^{va}

(8)

(8)

Bei jedem Titel ein Trompetensignal dazwischen, ebenso beim Fahnenstutzen, beim Hochziehen der Geschütze, etc.
 Hauptsteigerung im Tempo und Stärke beim Titel: "Achtung! – Fertig! .."

This machine music carries on independently of the human drama unfolding on the battleship as the anxious crew ready themselves for action and potential annihilation. Meisel's machine music became his most publicized trademark (discussed further in Chapters 6, 7 and 8) and, with its prominent position near the climax of *Potemkin*, was what the audience remembered most. After the Berlin premiere, Pfeiffer had informed Eisenstein about the success of Meisel's score, particularly for the Odessa Steps massacre and the squadron encounter:

[Meisel's music] helped the film achieve its greatest triumphs. In places the music was so powerful, that, in combination with the images on the screen, it affected the audience to such an extent that they had to grip their seats through inner excitement. The music for the Odessa Steps scene is particularly terrific and also at the time 'Potemkin' prepares itself for action. The beat and the rhythm of the machines are emulated in such a way that one literally believes to be travelling with the ship. The music you imagined for 'Potemkin' has been fulfilled in the most complete degree. (Pfeiffer to Eisenstein, Berlin, 1 June 1926)

Eisenstein may also have read Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *Erfolg (Success)*, which, in the chapter entitled 'The battle cruiser *Orlov*', describes a fictional performance of Eisenstein's film with Meisel's score, based on the author's own experience. Here is the extract pertinent to the squadron encounter:

The 'Orlov' advances towards [the squadron]. . . . On the screen and in front of it [i.e. in the orchestra] reigns a wild, agonised suspense, as slowly the gigantic ships close in a circle round the 'Orlov'. . . .

[The 'Orlov'] steams slowly towards her enemies, signalling: "Don't fire." One can hear the laboured breathing of the audience; the suspense is almost unendurable. "Don't fire!" is what these eight hundred people in the Berlin cinema are wishing and praying with all their might. . . .

A boundless joy fills everybody's heart when the circle of enemy ships lets the 'Orlov' pass, and she sails unscathed into the neutral harbour.

(Feuchtwanger 1930: 456–7)

The Film Society screening of *Potemkin* in London, November 1929, was Eisenstein's first opportunity to hear Meisel's score performed live by an orchestra (see Chapter 10). For a variety of reasons, Eisenstein was unhappy with this

performance and ‘at the end, when everyone was applauding the great “Potemkin” climax he complained that, with the Meisel music, we had turned his picture into an opera’ (Montagu 1968: 32). There appears to be some professional jealousy on Eisenstein’s part over the success of Meisel’s score, particularly the final reel. One cannot help but be sceptical regarding Eisenstein’s later claim to be the instigator of Meisel’s machine music. In the late 1930s, when he was working on *Nevsky*, Eisenstein began to create his own history, citing his brief collaboration with Meisel over *Potemkin* as his first step towards sound film. For example, in an unpublished essay on rhythm from 1938 he wrote that:

I was in Berlin at the time [March/April 1926] and was able to give Meisel basic instructions concerning the sound as I had envisaged it. He succeeded in carrying out these ideas, not, unfortunately, in every detail, but in the main successfully. . . .

[T]hrough rhythm . . . the generalising function of montage itself is most powerfully expressed; without rhythm montage would simply be the ‘shapeless’ sum of a succession of ‘facts’

[I]t is precisely rhythm which is the decisive principle enabling us to understand the organic, creative link between sound and picture, in such a way that it fits into our unitary conception of all the elements in all phases of cinematography.

It is not a matter of editing the film and composing the music in an *identical* rhythm. Nothing could be more mindless and simplistic. I described to Meisel my requirements for the music as ‘rhythm, rhythm and pure rhythm above all’ – but by no means in the sense of rhythmic coincidence between sound and picture. What I wanted was that the rhythm of the music should function as a *mode of expressivity*. Meisel grasped this and realised it most fully in the fifth reel [Act VI in the German version], where it was in fact most applicable, in the movement of the *Potemkin*’s engines as she steams to meet the squadron. . . . [In the final reel] the rhythmic principle . . . [raised] itself from one realm of application to another: thus the rhythm of the engines was raised beyond the realm of depiction into the realm of sound. . . .

[I]n *Potemkin* the unadorned rhythm functioned as a generalising image, as the supreme mode of expressing the inner tension of an emotion that was integral to the plot of the film. It was not a generalisation of the rhythm of the ship’s engines; it was a generalised image of the collective heartbeat of the

battleship's crew, for which the engines themselves were a *visual* generalising image. (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 235–8)

There is a similar passage in Eisenstein's essay 'O stroyenii veshchei', originally printed in *Iskusstvo Kino*, Moscow, June 1939, and translated as 'The Structure of the Film' in *Film Form*:

[The *Potemkin* score] was written very much as we work today on a sound-track. Or rather, as we *should always work*, with creative friendship and friendly creative collaboration between composer and director.

With Meisel this took place in spite of the short time for composition that he was given, and the brevity of my visit to Berlin in 1926 for this purpose. He agreed at once to forego the purely illustrative function common to musical accompaniments at that time (and not only at that time!) and stress certain 'effects', particularly in the 'music of machines' in the last reel.

This was my only categorical demand: not only to reject customary melodiousness for this sequence of 'Meeting the Squadron', relying entirely on a rhythmic beating of percussion, but also to give substance to this demand by establishing in the music as well as in the film at the decisive place a 'throwing over' into a 'new quality' in the *sound structure*.

So it was *Potemkin* at this point that stylistically broke away from the limits of the 'silent film with musical illustrations' into a new sphere – into *sound-film*, where true models of this art-form live in a unity of fused musical and visual images, *composing the work with a united audio-visual image*.

(Eisenstein 1949: 177–8; original emphases)

(alternative translation in Eisenstein 1987: 32–3)

Eisenstein's idea that 'the rhythm of the engines was raised beyond the realm of depiction into the realm of sound' bears a striking resemblance to comments published in a review after the Film Society performance of *Potemkin* in November 1929:

The chief point about [Meisel's] sound is that it is not literal, as it would have been in an ordinary talking film, which would have given us a reproduction of the ship's engines with all the incidental noises realistically and faithfully imitated. Meisel gives us a sequence of metallic sounds and a rhythm, makes this a part of his music, and achieves the fullest effects.

Here, in fact, is an early conception of that sound symbolism which the Russians consider to be the logical development of the audible film. Not the

actual sound, but the symbol of it, something suggestive which has a wider and more stimulating appeal to the imagination than the real sound could have.

(Film Weekly 1929-11-18)

According to Eisenstein's version of events, he had some considerable influence on Meisel's music for the squadron encounter. It is noticeable that Eisenstein does not describe in correct musical terms how the rhythmic beating during the squadron encounter increases in tempo and volume or has an associated rise in pitch; a static background would not have had the same effect. The extent of Eisenstein's musicality and musical knowledge needs to be questioned, since the discerning theoretician is not always evident in practice. Yon Barna, the first of Eisenstein's biographers to engage seriously with the materials in the Eisenstein archive, highlights the dichotomy between the youthful reluctant amateur and the mature theoretician who appropriated 'counterpoint' and other musical terms in his writings on film:

Another interesting point is Eisenstein's hearty dislike of his piano lessons and his later insistence that he had 'never had an ear for music' and could rarely remember or hum a familiar tune. Yet he was the first to discover in creative practice the idea of audio-musical montage and subsequently to elaborate with incredible precision and finesse the theory of combining visual images with music and sound – thus demonstrating a deep understanding of musical structure.

(Barna 1973: 25)

His lack of prowess as a performer did not curtail Eisenstein's interest in music and from the citations in his writings it is evident that he read many scholarly books on composers and musicological issues. An admiration for J. S. Bach and a fascination with Bach's masterful manipulation of fugue were central to Eisenstein's theories of montage and audio-visual counterpoint. For example, he was interested in how harmony arises in fugue as a result of the interweaving of independent melodic voices, just as a new, third idea arises out of the juxtaposition of two ideas through montage or through the counterpoint of sound and image (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 246). Eisenstein claimed that, by demanding that Meisel eschewed melody in

favour of the *'bare rhythmic percussion beat'*, he (the director) *'essentially forced the music as well in this decisive spot to "jump over" into a "new quality": into a noise structure . . . [creating] a single audiovisual image'* (Eisenstein 1987: 33; original emphases).

Nicholas Cook proffered a metaphor model as a 'general explanatory framework' to explain more precisely the effects arising from the juxtaposition of music and image, whereby meaning 'arises from the intersection between sound and picture and the corresponding transfer of attributes' (Cook 1998: 85). Cook used the sequence from *Psycho* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) where Marion is driving through the rainstorm to the Bates Motel to illustrate how Bernard Herrmann's busy score

jumps the diegetic gap, so to speak, 'seeking out' and uncovering the turmoil in Marion's mind, and thus transferring its own qualities to her. . . . And the result of these reciprocal interactions is to create a bond of empathy between audience and film character . . . (Cook 1998: 66–7)

Meisel's accompaniment to the squadron encounter 'jumps the diegetic gap' in a similar fashion, transferring the regular, mechanical rhythm of the ship's engines to the crew members, providing a continuous, organic heartbeat in a manner that Eisenstein's images only briefly suggested. The constantly increasing tempo and volume during this ostinato therefore has some diegetic plausibility, when considered in relation to heartbeats rather than engine pistons at full-speed. Meisel's percussive beating also transferred itself to the audience (as suggested in Feuchtwanger's narrative), physically engendering tension through an increase in their heartbeats and breathing rate. The motoric motion captured the audience viscerally, so that they achieved a 'heightened empathy with the experience being depicted on the screen' (Widgery 1994 [1990]: 119). Meisel's pulsating ostinato is similar to the present day clichéd use of electronic drones of low tessitura, employed to generate visceral unease and suspense in current film scores (Cooke 2008: 472), countless television quiz shows and reality TV competitions.

Meisel's ostinato seems banal and meaningless when viewed on the page or heard outside the context of the film sequence. The score is best experienced live in a venue with sympathetic acoustics. I was privileged to attend the second performance of Imig's reconstruction at the 55th Berlinale (2005). The effect of the percussive beats reverberating through the auditorium at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, was truly electrifying and recreated the breathless anticipation experienced by the Berlin audiences in 1926, waiting to see if the squadron would fire on the *Potemkin*. At such moments, Meisel demonstrated that his accompaniment to a silent film worked in a similar fashion to a classical Hollywood sound-film score, which, in the words of Herrmann, 'is the communicating link between the screen and the audience, reaching out and enveloping all into one single experience' (Thomas 1979: 143).

Klaus Pringsheim, a fellow composer and conductor, was furious that Meisel had achieved fame through the use of a simple rhythmic ostinato, citing contemporaneous uses of it in relation to music for the stage:

The music which he wrote for [*Potemkin*] has much in its favour, even more has it since been spoken of by him. But even here he is the beneficiary of achievements which are not his. What was it, what new thing was he credited with? In the first place, music of mechanical noises; the striking and pounding of the machine, presented with orchestral means; motoric movement played out in musically driving power, exploited as an acoustically rising motif of the dramatic events. And secondly, in general, progressing out of that: the absolute pulse as musical factor of the first degree; percussion ostinato as the dominating music event. Was that in fact new for film? However it was done often enough before *Potemkin*: on the stage; by Reinhardt, by Jessner, on the Volksbühne. And Meisel, as a fellow orchestral player, as temporary music director, as a student, has had opportunity often enough to get to know these things in practice. What he was able to see and hear there was sufficient to provide a fleet of battleships with noise music.

(Pringsheim 1928-04; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 68-9)

Sound effects and musical illustrations

There are many examples of synchronized sound effects, all of which correspond to action in the foreground. Some of these are listed in Table 4.2.

4.2 Examples of sound effects in *Potemkin*

Piano score page	Scene description
1	Crashing waves
2	Boatswain stumbles below deck amidst sailors asleep in their hammocks; he strikes the shoulders of the nearest sailor twice (see opening of Figure 4.9)
9	Cook chops rotten carcass of meat with an axe eight times
14	A sailor smashes the officer's plate
19 and 20	The priest slaps the crucifix in his hand like a weapon (three times, then twice)
21	Commander Golikoff is seized
22	An officer tries to escape the mutineers by climbing on the open piano
22	Dr Smirnov is seized
23	Dr Smirnov is thrown into the water
23	Vakulinchuk is shot
34	The Cossacks fire their rifles at the people of Odessa
39	The baby carriage rolls down the Odessa Steps
45–6	Sailors blow whistles and sound the trumpet as the instruction to 'Clear the decks' goes round the ship (see Figure 4.7, around rehearsal mark 'K')

Kalinak criticized Meisel's reliance on mickey-mousing, citing as examples '[t]he crash of the waves on the rocky jetty in the opening shot, the lash striking the sailor in the sleeping quarters sequence, and the axe striking the piece of infected meat in the kitchen scene' (Kalinak 1983: 38 and 43, n. 26). Since these are all moments where plausible orchestral sounds have been synchronized with screen action, they should be regarded as sound effects rather than mickey-mousing, because of their iconic (and isomorphic) qualities (Curtis 1992: 202).

Where possible, Meisel uses tremolos and caesuras near to his sound effects to enable the conductor to catch the exact moment required. This can be seen in Figure 4.9 before the boatswain strikes the young sailor (bar 1) and before the latter's shoulders heave in pain (one bar before 'E'). Most of Meisel's sound effects are directly notated in the score, typically via synchronized stinger chords in the orchestra, percussion strikes, or appropriate instrumental representations (as in the case of the whistle and trumpet signals in Figure 4.7, bottom system). The remainder

are indicated via written instructions and instigated on the conductor's signal. Examples of the latter include: the piano crash when the officer steps on the keyboard; a cymbal crash when Dr Smirnov is thrown into the water; the shooting of Vakulinchuk; Cossack rifle shots; and the descending *glissando* on the piano when the baby carriage rolls down the steps. The orchestral parts supposedly indicate that a large ratchet should be used for the descending baby carriage (Merchant 1973).

4.9 Boatswain strikes young sailor (*Potemkin*, Act I: PS 2)

The musical score for 'Boatswain strikes young sailor' from *Potemkin*, Act I: PS 2, is presented in two systems. The first system is in 2/4 time and features a piano part with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a cymbal crash (*fz* (Becken)). The instruction 'Kontrollleur stolpert Schläge' is written above the staff. The second system continues the piano part with a *lunga* marking and a key signature change to E major, indicated by a box containing the letter 'E'. The instruction 'Schluchzen des geschlagenen' is written above the staff, followed by 'Etwas schneller' and 'espr.' (espressivo), and a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

Borrowed materials

Kleiman (interviewed in Demenok 2007) stated that ‘We know that [Eisenstein] brought Meisel some records and suggested a few themes’, raising the tantalizing possibility that the director instigated some of Meisel’s borrowings. Whilst there appears to be no further evidence to support this claim, it is plausible that Eisenstein had specific music in mind for the instances where there are images of people singing or whistling, and communicated his requirements to Meisel. In the main, the borrowed material is predictable and in keeping with the film’s topic, consisting mostly of Russian work songs and revolutionary songs from French, Polish and Russian sources. Many of these were anthems known by workers’ movements around the world, allowing those who knew the appropriate lyrics to add further

layers of meaning. Meisel may have already known the songs from his involvement with KPD meetings.

Short fragments from 'La Marseillaise' occur most frequently of all, typically as brass interjections superimposed on the prevailing texture and as part of the 'Rebellion' motif. Scenes of a sailor whistling as he washes dishes in the officers' kitchen are matched with the verse melody from the Russian work song 'Dubinushka' ('Little Club'), traditionally sung by those doing hard labour. Fabich (1993: 259) omitted to mention the diegetic motivation behind this quotation and also that the refrain melody was used for the earlier scene where two sailors are taking a break from their labours. At the end of the dish-washing scene the opening of the chorale melody 'Jesu, meine Zuversicht' ('Jesus Christ, my sure defence'), adapted by J. S. Bach from a hymn by Johann Crüger, is dissonantly distorted to represent the irony of the text 'Give us this day our daily bread' on the officer's plate. During the mutiny, this chorale melody reappears as a brief satirical foxtrot (in the manner of a leitmotif) when the ship's priest vainly attempts to stop the mutiny. Another quotation heard during the mutiny is the opening phrase from the proletarian song 'Brüder, zur Sonne, zur Freiheit' ('Smelo, tovarishtshi v' nogu' or 'Brothers, towards sun, towards freedom'), also chromatically distorted.

The majority of the borrowed material is heard in extensive quotations during the scenes at Odessa before the massacre on the steps. The Russian funeral dirge 'Vyzhertvoyu pali' ('Unsterbliche Opfer' or 'You fell as a victim') is played as a crowd gathers round the dead body of Vakulinchuk (one of the mutiny leaders killed during the uprising) on the Odessa pier. Eventually the crowd is visibly singing, providing some diegetic motivation, although none of the intertitles contain direct textual allusions. This melody – popular since the 1905 revolution – is also quoted in the third movement of Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony, Op. 103, which in turn was used for the same scene in the 1976 'Jubilee' sound-film release of *Potemkin*. As the sorrow of the crowd turns to anger at the perpetrators (and at the man who cries

“Down with the Jews!”), revolutionary fervour grows in Meisel’s score to a variant of the Polish ‘Warszawianka’ (‘Song of Warsaw’), overlaid with fragments of ‘La Marseillaise’. The quotation is longer than Fabich (1993: 258) suggests, containing the verse as well as the refrain melody (PS 26–7). When the citizens of Odessa express their solidarity with the mutineers, Meisel used ‘La Carmagnole’ in the same Soviet variant as that used by Myaskovsky in the finale of his Sixth Symphony and by Shostakovich in his score for *New Babylon* (1929). The incipits from ‘La Marseillaise’ and ‘La Carmagnole’ are also briefly heard after the massacre, whilst the mutineers debate their next course of action (PS 40).

Meisel’s score may contain further, as yet unidentified, borrowings. For example: ‘[T]he battleship finally sailed through the Admiral’s fleet without a shot having been fired to the musical motif from “Frühlings Erwachen”’ (Pfeiffer 1980: 258). This suggests that the theme Fabich (1993: 253) designated as the *Sieges-Thema* (‘Victory’ theme) may have been borrowed material, but, given the popularity of ‘Frühlings Erwachen’ as a title for character pieces in the nineteenth century (typically for solo piano or violin), the exact source is unclear.

Harmonic and melodic language

Fabich meticulously analysed every intervallic relationship in his account of leitmotifs and musical illustrations, but it seems more prudent to examine Meisel’s general style. The majority of the score is an unremitting minor tonality peppered with a high level of dissonance (particularly added seconds, augmented triads, diminished-seventh chords and localized tritone dissonances), creating an almost constant level of unease or agitation. Meisel’s reliance on tremolos and surface dissonance to induce tension was common in contemporaneous original film scores for depictions of anything mysterious or menacing: see, for example, the motif for the villainous Hagen (slayer of Siegfried) from Huppertz’s score to *Die Nibelungen* in Figure 4.10 (reproduced in Fabich 1993: 207).

4.10 Hagen's motif (*Die Nibelungen*)

3 Hagen
Langsam, schwer.

pp

mf 8^{bb} mit

3

8^{bb}

This shared *agitato* language has a long heritage, dating back at least to the Wolf's Glen scene in Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* (1821), and can also be found in the 'agitatos' common to many anthologies of silent-film repertory music. The difference lies in its employment. Whereas Huppertz reserved *agitato* moments for special dramatic effects within a more lyrical late-Romantic framework, Meisel inverted this principle, breaking out into lyricism from a predominantly dissonant backdrop. His most lyrical moments also tend to be borrowed material: bright major tonality is reserved for French revolutionary songs, an extended theme Meisel devised as a countermelody to 'La Marseillaise' (Fabich 1993: 251), and the 'Victory' theme.

The *Potemkin* score contains many identifiable stylistic traits which would remain constant throughout Meisel's career: simple four-square rhythms; localized dissonances (augmented or diminished chords); chromatic and whole-tone scale fragments in melodic and harmonic material; elements of bitonality with thematic material in consecutive second intervals to suggest something rotten ('Smirnov' or the swaying meat carcasses); and bass lines moving in simple contrary motion to the melodic material or creating a static tonic-dominant ostinato quaver movement.

5 *Überflüssige Menschen*

Using the profits from *Potemkin*, Prometheus produced three feature films with major German stars in an attempt to capture broad commercial appeal and satisfy the legal requirement to distribute German films. Only one of these, *Überflüssige Menschen* (*Superfluous People*, dir. Alexander Rasumny), was ever distributed (Murray 1990: 121–2) and once again Prometheus commissioned Meisel to provide a score. The film's convoluted plot, based on several Chekhov short stories, concerned the humorous exploits of some village musicians. The cast included Werner Krauss, who had played the title role in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (dir. Robert Wiene, 1920). Three presentations of the film were given at a gala premiere in the Capitol cinema in Berlin on 2 November 1926. Meisel's original score was conducted by Willy Schmidt-Gentner, a leading Berlin composer and conductor, and members of the cast were present to take their applause at the end of the premiere showings (Steinicke 1926-11-04; reproduced in Kühn *et al.* 1975b: 58–9).

Gerd Meier (1962a: 14) maintained that the premiere run was successful, playing to packed houses every day, but mayhem allegedly broke out after the third performance on the opening night, with most of the audience whistling and jeering (Schacht 1926-11-03). The premiere run did not exceed its first week and a shorter, improved version (*Film-Kurier* 1926-12-04) fared little better when released early in December; in short, the film was a commercial flop. The Berlin reviews were generally negative, criticizing the film's lack of topicality – the film's title had given false hope of social criticism regarding issues surrounding unemployment – and the lack of narrative cohesion. *Überflüssige Menschen* was too commercial for left-wing tastes, but never reached the mass public, as many cinema owners were still unwilling to associate themselves with the left-wing Prometheus (Murray 1990: 122–4).

The Dresden Kammerlichtspiele hired *Überflüssige Menschen* and Meisel's original music (arranged for a salon orchestra), where it ran for a week between 2 and 8 December. The music director Herbert Kawan had great difficulties during rehearsals; his tribulations were later reported in *Film-Ton-Kunst* (Erdmann 1927-07-15). Kawan had received the orchestral parts eight days before the first performance, but found he was missing the piano and some brass parts. It transpired that no separate piano part had ever been written, since it had not been needed for the Berlin premiere. Kawan duly requested and received a full score, from which he painstakingly arranged a piano part, but it soon became apparent that there were further omissions in the orchestral parts, including the 'Rothschild' motif for one of the main characters. Prometheus, despite the unprecedented demand for Meisel's *Potemkin* score, had failed to plan for the preparation and distribution of hire parts in good time. Their incompetence and inexperience were to be repeated after the premiere of *Zehn Tage* (see Chapter 8).

Meisel's score has not survived, but glimpses regarding its structure and content can be gleaned from occasional sentences at the end of the contemporaneous film reviews. Here is a selection:

[The score included] echoes from operas and use of popular folksongs.

(*Der Kinematograph* 1926-11-07)

The individual characters were clearly brought out motivically – the motif of the magician in his swaggering excessiveness was particularly effective.

(*Film-Kurier* 1926-11-03)

One must respect Meisel for daring to go beyond the narrow boundaries of the conventional harmony in film music, for not shying away from occasionally even writing objectionable sounding music. The average man at least will not easily come to terms with the fact that the constantly recurring main theme, which distinguishes the splendid dilettante band formed from 'superfluous people', sounds exactly in the ear as if the village musicians are tuning their instruments. This apparently excessive realism, which to a greater or lesser extent draws attention to itself in other places, is however no flaw, since it

reflects the anti-culture unpretentiousness of the petty bourgeoisie, its passion for gossip feasting on the weaknesses of their contemporaries once again.

(Joachimstal 1926-12-15)

Just over a year after the success of *Potemkin*, an article about Meisel concluded with the following statements:

In a short time, Meisel has already made a name for himself with his first score. Incidentally, he had luck with the choice of this *Potemkin*-film. He is called Potemkin-Meisel after it.

With the second film it would not have been half as good, since that was *Überflüssige Menschen*. (Film-Kurier 1927-06-11)

The above insinuates that the composer would not have relished being labelled ‘*Überflüssige*-Meisel’. The most damning comments appeared much later in a *Film-Kurier* article entitled ‘*Ueberflüssige Originalmusik? Ein schwieriges Problem*’ (‘Superfluous original music? A difficult issue’), published whilst Meisel was working in London in 1929:

The fate of an original composition, it seems to me, is typified by Meisel’s score for the film *Überflüssige Menschen*. The film (by the way a totally magnificent and very unjustly unsuccessful film) ran for about eight days in the ‘Capitol’. Meisel had to conduct the music himself, since even the master of all film conductors, Schmidt-Gentner, found it a hard nut to crack.

Then the film was cancelled – the music, written for a large orchestra, was probably never heard again. Although it represented the product of lengthy work from a serious musician, it buried the film, however, because it underlined the divisions of the individual scenes – Meisel was not able to avoid going into too much detail, the great danger of all original music – that was the fate of the film and his score . . .

The example of *Überflüssige Menschen* clearly shows, ‘better a good [pot-pourri] illustration than a mediocre original composition’. Music in the cinema is a secondary element: it must not attract too much attention and has to support the main point, namely the film. (Daus 1929-07-05)

The revelation that Meisel had been compelled to take over as conductor during the premiere run suggests that Schmidt-Gentner had been unable to master Meisel’s detailed synchronization requirements. Overall, the evidence in these reviews

suggests that Meisel's score put into practice the hallmarks of narrative scoring he had suggested in his imagined *Faust* accompaniment; his subsequent score for *Der heilige Berg* would consolidate this approach.

The film print of *Überflüssige Menschen* has survived. It was one of many Prometheus rarities shown at Leipzig's International Documentary Film Festival in 1973, as part of a retrospective entitled 'Film in Klassenkampf – Traditionen der proletarischen Filmbewegung in Deutschland vor 1933' (Ruf 1973-12-14). Subsequently, the film print was restored and given its first public screening in September 1978 at the Metropol-Filmtheater, Bonn. Werner Schmidt-Boelcke, one of the last surviving silent-film illustrators from the 1920s, compiled and conducted an 'authentic' silent-film accompaniment using selections from composers such as Massenet, Liadov and Tchaikovsky, and music of his own composition (Prox 1979: 32). The film with Schmidt-Boelcke's accompaniment was subsequently broadcast by ZDF in August 1979 and again in June 1985.¹

Kurt Grimm, a former representative of Ufa in Leipzig who joined Prometheus in October 1926 (Murray 1990: 257, n. 28), wrote a history of Prometheus, *Zur Geschichte der Prometheus Film-Verleih und Vertriebs-GmbH*, which survives in manuscript form with handwritten annotations. Grimm claimed that Meisel provided a score for *Sein Mahnruf* (*Ego Prizyv/His Call*; dir. Yakov Protazanov, 1925), a Soviet documentary about Lenin released by Prometheus after it had passed the censors on 11 November 1926 (Meier 1962a: 15–16). No further corroborating evidence has been found. Meisel had plenty of other work at hand: he was preparing incidental music for a production of *Hamlet* starting on 3 December (see Table 3.1), and had been commissioned by Ufa to write a score for Arnold Fanck's latest mountain film *Der heilige Berg*, which had its Berlin premiere a fortnight later. In the event, Meisel did not work for Prometheus again until a year later, when they

¹ Press file for *Überflüssige Menschen* in Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt. See also a letter by Schmidt-Boelcke, inviting his friends to watch the TV broadcast, Berlin Deutsche Kinemathek Schriftgut G/UR 453.

commissioned his score for Eisenstein's *October*. Sudendorf (1984: 19) assumed that the poor reception of *Überflüssige Menschen* and inability of Prometheus to distribute his score successfully caused Meisel to accept commissions from elsewhere. Whilst Meisel later expressed his frustration with Prometheus in several letters written to Eisenstein between April and September 1928, there is nothing pertinent to this period which confirms these assumptions.

6 *Der heilige Berg*: Romantic yearnings

Sudendorf found Meisel's decision to score *Der heilige Berg* for Ufa unpalatable, describing the composer as: 'possibly too weak-willed to decline such a lucrative offer; possibly he thought that he would come out of the affair unblemished, since he was not conducting it himself; however one looks at it, it remains an anomaly, a foul smell of opportunism lingers' (Sudendorf 1984: 20). No doubt Ufa was deliberately capitalizing on Meisel's new-found fame, but Meisel would have relished the artistic opportunity to match his ideal scoring practices (as described in his *Faust* article) with a more traditional narrative than *Potemkin* had afforded him. Far from being an anomaly in Meisel's oeuvre, *Der heilige Berg* is the blueprint for both *The Crimson Circle* and *Der blaue Expreß*, its style a portent of what might have been had Meisel lived long enough to have scored more sound films, perhaps even in Hollywood. On a more pragmatic note, Meisel could not guarantee a decent living if he continued to work for Prometheus: the lucrative nature of his conducting opportunities in the wake of *Potemkin* had not been replicated with *Überflüssige Menschen*.

Audiences of all political persuasions were attracted by the beautiful, dangerous and seemingly inaccessible outdoor location shooting in Fanck's mountain films, which were in stark contrast to the fantastic sets and studio-bound films for which Weimar cinema was famous. The plots and actors were almost incidental to the spectacular mountain photography, daredevil climbing and acrobatic skiing. Accordingly, much of *Der heilige Berg* consists of a ski-jumping event, a long-distance ski-race and a rescue-party of skiers racing through the night with torches. At the time, those involved in *Der heilige Berg* were unaware that the *Bergfilm* genre would become an 'ideological mantrap' (Sudendorf 1984: 20). The director later recalled the more innocent times in which the film had been made:

DER HEILIGE BERG was my first really great success even abroad, and it was truly remarkable that a work so fundamentally German stemming from German Romanticism was just as well understood and empathized with everywhere abroad

Such a difference between the youth then and today! I would no longer direct such a film before them today. The beauty of the romantic is lost to us. Thieves and gangsters are today's heroes in film; revolvers, knives and bombs are the most important requisites and today a Kolle¹ brings the masses into the cinema, where once it was my skiing and mountain films. (Fanck 1972: 165)

This innocence echoes a comment at the end of a contemporaneous review, namely that '[t]here is something in this work which has often been mocked and ridiculed, yet which we would not like to do without: it is German idealism' (*Der Kinematograph* 1926-12-19).

The plot of *Der heilige Berg* involves a love triangle between a dancer, Diotima (Leni Riefenstahl), and two mountain climbers: the enigmatic 'The Friend' (Luis Trenker) and his younger companion, Vigo. Diotima and 'The Friend' fall in love, despite his mother's warnings. Vigo is also besotted with Diotima. When 'The Friend' discovers Diotima with another man, he takes Vigo on a dangerous mountain climb to get away from her. Whilst sheltering from a storm on an icy precipice, he discovers that it was Vigo he had seen with Diotima; his threatening behaviour causes Vigo to stumble over the edge. The older climber is unable to pull Vigo to safety. Despite Vigo's pleas, he refuses to cut the rope that binds them together and save himself, but stoically remains standing all night, holding on to Vigo. At sunrise he hallucinates that he and Diotima are entering an ice palace. His vision is shattered and he walks over the edge to his death. A rescue party summoned by Diotima arrives too late to save him.

¹ A reference to the films of Oswalt Kolle, a famous sex educationalist in the 1960s and 1970s.

Censorship history

I have not been able to ascertain exactly when Meisel received his Ufa commission or how long he spent composing the score. Presumably he only received the contract once the film had been registered. *Der heilige Berg* was first censored by the Berlin authorities on 7 October 1926, with further examinations on 16 December 1926 and 30 March 1927. The length of the film became progressively shorter each time (3100, 3024 and 2668 metres; see Appendix II), but, unlike *Potemkin*'s censorship history, there is no evidence from the registration cards that these cuts were imposed by the authorities. It seems more likely that the changes were in response to commercial pressures from Ufa to make the film shorter or from the director to tighten the dramatic impact. A typical main feature film rarely lasted longer than ninety minutes: the 3100 metre version of *Der heilige Berg* would have been just over two hours long and the 2668 metre version still 106 minutes in length (assuming a projection rate of 22 fps). The second censorship examination took place the day before the Berlin premiere. The Ufa programme for the premiere (a copy of which is housed in the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt) had been printed in advance and still listed the film length as 3100 metres. If the second registered version of the film was used, this would have caused minor last-minute changes to Meisel's score. The third examination of the film took place prior to its general release in April 1927. A comparison of the registration cards for the second and third examinations reveals that the changes were not simple cuts, but involved revising and re-ordering the intertitles in most reels, resulting in some changes of scene order. This would have necessitated more significant changes to Meisel's score.

The Berlin premiere took place on 17 December 1926 at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo with Meisel's score conducted by Arthur Guttman. The premiere was generally well received by the press, but some found the kitsch romantic plot an unnecessary distraction from the beautiful alpine scenery, mountaineering and exciting ski sports

(W. H. 1926-12-18; D[oor]w[ien] 1926-12-19). The critical reception of Meisel's score was mixed. Selected reviews are incorporated within the analysis of the score, below. Working for Ufa at least guaranteed that Meisel's music was printed for hire purposes, but there are no statistics regarding its dissemination beyond the premiere venue. Cinemas owned by Ufa throughout Germany would have been expected to perform Meisel's score alongside the film (Prox 1995: 15; Sudendorf 1984: 19), but may not have been able to master the required feat of synchronization.

Extant sources and reconstructions

There is a fragile original copy of Meisel's printed piano score for *Der heilige Berg* housed in the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt (Meisel 1927b); no full score or instrumental parts have survived. The exact provenance of the piano score has not been recorded, but it was already part of the archive when Sudendorf was working on his monograph in the early 1980s. There are ninety-one pages in total, printed double-sided. The quality of the typesetting is far superior to that in the *Potemkin* piano score (reflecting Ufa's prestige) and all the annotated intertitles and action indications are typeset. The score is divided into nine sections corresponding to the number of reels and the formal divisions in the film (a prelude and eight acts). As in the *Potemkin* piano score, there are occasional orchestration directions and additional instrumental cues, some of which are provided on extra staves. This extra information is unevenly distributed throughout the score and is patchier from the second act onwards. Again there are indications of the beginnings of most intertitles and sundry descriptions concerning the action. The piano score contains both printed excisions and bars crossed out by hand in either red or grey pencil. These minor changes occur sporadically throughout the score, most frequently up to and including Act V. It is not clear exactly how these revisions relate to the three different versions of the film from 1926/1927, particularly the handwritten excisions.

Imig first reconstructed an orchestral score for live performance in the late 1980s to accompany a surviving black and white film print (the original was tinted), provenance unknown (Imig 2010). He recorded this reconstruction in 1990, which was later released on CD in 1995 (edel 0029062EDL; Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana). The recording of *Der heilige Berg* is less than an hour in length and probably reflects an abridgement of Imig's reconstruction rather than the length of the print used. Many of the closely synchronized sound effects in Meisel's piano score (including some sections of dialogue which the composer simulated in an operatic manner) are missing, as are some of the diegetic sections. This restricts the value of the recording for purposes of analysis. The film print for *Der heilige Berg* was restored in 2001 from two different nitrate copies surviving in Berlin and Milan film archives, using the registration card from 16 December 1926 to provide the missing intertitles. This restored print is 106 minutes long and has been released on DVD (Kino Video K307, 2003; also Eureka EKA40072, 2004). These DVD releases feature a new original score by Aljoscha Zimmermann for a small ensemble (violin, cello, piano and two percussionists). Imig has re-worked his earlier reconstruction for live performance with the restored print, as, for example, at the annual international Mountain Film Festival in Trento, Italy, in April 2010.

The exact constitution of Meisel's orchestra at the premiere on 17 December 1926 is unknown, but the Ufa-Palast allegedly maintained 'the largest cinema orchestra anywhere in Germany' (Prox 1995: 15), so Meisel may have had a full symphonic complement at his disposal. The instrumentation suggested in the piano score indicates a standard late-romantic orchestra, including trombones and tuba, supplemented by harp, solo piano and organ. There is a list of 'required percussion instruments' at the front of the piano score:

Timpani (sponge and wooden sticks), bass drum, cymbals, an extra cymbal, side drum, triangle, glockenspiel, tam-tam, cow bell, tambourine, xylophone, siren,

accordion, large rattle, birch rod, broken crockery, wind machine, thunder
machine, water machine. (Meisel 1927b)

The second half of the list includes an accordion and various implements for specific sound effects. Presumably the accordion was used to accompany some if not all of the appropriate scenes where accordions are played on screen, discussed below.

Rügner (1988: 174 and 190) described Meisel's range and employment of percussion instruments as 'startling', but Meisel's list is similar to the traps built into the largest cinema organs of the day. A description of the three-manual Oskalyd organ installed in the Palast-Lichtspiele in Stuttgart (October 1927) lists sundry percussion (xylophone, large and small drums, cymbals, gong, sleigh bells, tambourine, woodblock, claves and triangle) and many 'backstage' sound effects typical of stage-drama illustration: low and high thunder, church bells, quiet knock, loud knock, machine, train, car, siren, steam engine whistle, telephone, rain and birdsong (Dettke 1995: 308–9).

Analysis

Rügner (1988: 170–90, 351–61) analysed *Der heilige Berg* as part of his thesis on film music in Germany between 1924 and 1934. He compared Meisel's score with those Becce had written for two other mountain films directed by Fanck and starring Riefenstahl: *Das blaue Licht* (1932, sound film) and *Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palü* (1935, sound version). Rügner concluded that all three used leitmotif technique and relied on programmatic genres to evoke aspects common to dramas within an alpine setting, such as the pastoral, nature's power during storms, emotions (such as love and sadness), native music-making (for example *Ländler*), and mythic beauty (Rügner 1988: 218–19, 172–3). These programmatic genres stemmed mainly from nineteenth-century German romantic music and became codified through published compilations of repertory music. Rügner made no reference to Sudendorf's monograph on Meisel, or, more crucially, to Meisel's article on *Der heilige Berg* entitled 'Wie schreibt man

Filmmusik?’ (‘How does one write film music?’). This was published in the April 1927 issue of the *Ufa-Magazin* to tie-in with the general release of *Der heilige Berg* (Meisel 1927-04-01; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 58–60). The article is illustrated with photographs of the composer and the three leading characters, plus six handwritten music examples in piano-score format. The ensuing discussion of the score will incorporate several extracts from the article where appropriate.

In general, the harmonic and melodic language in Meisel’s score is overtly Romantic, and at times is reminiscent of the sentimental salon music associated with traditional Viennese coffee houses. Nonetheless, there are still similarities with *Potemkin*. These similarities are most evident in the sectional structure of the score – built from self-contained ideas, crudely juxtaposed with little or no attempt at transition – and Meisel’s dogged reliance on common time. Only the themes associated with Vigo and some of the diegetic music, discussed below, break out of this metric monotony. Thematic material recurs much more frequently in the score for *Der heilige Berg* than in *Potemkin*. This is entirely dictated by the regular return of characters, images and inferences in the film. If, say, Eisenstein had shown more images of the squirming maggots in *Potemkin*, doubtless there would have been more correlating instances of Meisel’s ‘Maggots’ motif. The claim that ‘instances of [recurring] musical labels are only found very seldom’ (Rügner 1988: 180) in *Der heilige Berg* is demonstrably false. Meisel is economic with his motivic material and recycles it wherever possible.

Leitmotifs

Meisel explained in his *Ufa-Magazin* article how he composed ‘visually’ from moment to moment, drawing instant inspiration from the images:

A filmic image stimulates me in such a way that the moment I see it I experience a distinctive accompanying sound shape for the relevant scene. The outline plan for the Ufa-Film ‘Der heilige Berg’ came about during the first showing in the presence of the director, Dr Fanck, whose great passion for nature and unusual

intimacy with the mountains made a huge impression on me. Immediately I had the musical likeness of the tragic plot within the context of the sinister, majestic Nature-hymn of the mountains, which governs the entire work. The composition therefore developed in exact agreement with the film storyline: the feminine, sweet, dance-like theme of Diotima; the masculine, harsh, problematic theme of the mountain climber; and the youthful, tender, lyrical theme of Vigo, all intertwined. (Meisel 1927-04-01)

The first incarnation of his 'Nature-hymn' occurs in the Prologue for Diotima's 'Dance to the Sea' (see discussion of diegetic music, below) and is reproduced in Figure 6.1. Its most significant reprise is at the opening of the final act, as a stately hymn underscoring the mountain climber's hallucination of an ice palace before he steps to his death. Most of the other themes in *Der heilige Berg* are much shorter. For example, Meisel's music examples included the themes for the three leading characters, plus a motif from the Prologue which he designated as representing 'Fate'. These themes, together with that for the mountain itself (first identified by Ottenheim 1944: 103), have been reproduced in Figure 6.2 in the order and format in which they first appear in the score. From these it is evident that, as in *Potemkin*, Meisel's thematic material is simplistic in its design, using age-old musical gestures to reflect the characteristics of the person, object, or abstract idea through appropriate trajectories and contours. The descending fragments of chromatic and whole-tone scales for the impending doom in the 'Fate' motif are contrasted with the ascending themes for the hero, the majestic 'mountain' and the youthful Vigo, whereas the contours of Diotima's theme are more complex and seductive.

There are many more themes, some of which Rügner has noted, including themes for each friendship pairing within the love-triangle, the ski-racers, and the rescuers who try in vain to retrieve 'The Friend' and Vigo from the north face of the mountain. The main characters are differentiated through opposing tonal regions: D major/minor for Diotima; A-flat major for the 'Friend'; augmented harmonies

resolving on A-flat major for the 'Mountain'; and more restless tonalities for the impetuous Vigo.

6.1 Diotima's 'Dance to the Sea' ('Nature-hymn') and conducting the waves (*Der heilige Berg*, Prologue: PS 5)

(„Ihr Leben, aber, das ist ihr Tanz“)

Viol. Cl. u.s.w.
Cel. Hrf.
Cb. Fag.

(Diot. beginnt zu tanzen)
Str. Holzbl. Kl. Tr. *mf*

hervortreten

4 6

tr (Diot. mit erhobenen Armen)
Trgl.

Dunkler Himmel schwarzes Meer
Trp. Pos. *p* *espress.* *marcato* (Brandung) (Wellenspritzer)
Ob. Fl. Str. Hrf. *fz*

(Wellenzeitlupe) 5 (Armbeweg. 2) (Wellenzeitlupe)
Pos. *fz* Cello Fag.

6.2 The five main themes (*Der heilige Berg*)

'Fate' (Prologue: PS 3)

(„Eine tragische Dichtung“)
Fag. Br.

'Mountain' (Prologue: PS 4)

2 *breit* („Dort wo der Fels steil und trotzig“)

Diotima (Prologue: PS 7-8)

Viol.

'The Friend' or 'Er' (Prologue: PS 8)

Trp.

Vigo (Act I: PS 17)

It is significant that the 'Friend' and the 'Mountain' share similar tonal areas, and that the tritone interval between this tonality and that of Diotima embodies the mother's warning to her son that 'The sea and the mountain will never wed'. Fanck's meagre plot and virtually non-existent character development is mirrored by themes which, in

the main, return in their original keys with little or no variation. This variation is limited to minimal tonal alterations and truncations to fit the available timings for every significant appearance of, or reference to, the associated character, natural element, or resurgent emotion. Meisel's declaration that the themes for the three main characters are 'all intertwined' does not withstand close examination: the reality is much simpler and usually involves close juxtaposition and alternation of thematic blocks to match the director's cross-cutting, or superimposition above an ostinato or tremolo background. This is demonstrated in Figure 6.3, an extract from the end of Act VI when Vigo falls over the cliff edge. Sheltering from the storm on an icy precipice, Vigo tells 'The Friend' that he is in love with a dancer. As Vigo imagines Diotima, she is seen in flashback and her theme is heard in its usual key but in the bass register (Figure 6.3, middle of third stave). This is reminiscent of the following instruction in Lang and West:

An effective means of variation is offered by placing the melody in a lower register and ornatng it in the treble with appropriate figure work . . . This treatment might suggest itself if the hero were pictured in a meditation of which the heroine is the subject . . . (Lang and West 1970 [1920]: 10)

The camera cuts back briefly to 'The Friend', then to Vigo, whose theme is heard as he declares Diotima's name (Figure 6.3, fourth stave). One theme permeates Act VI: a three-note chromatic descent for shots of 'The Friend' and Vigo on the icy precipice (*Der Abgrund*), a malleable thematic cell similar to Steiner's motif for *King Kong* (dir. Merian C. Cooper, 1933). This 'Precipice' motif (see opening and closing bars of Figure 6.3) is derived from the longer 'Fate' motif identified by Meisel, but is more prevalent.

6.3 Vigo falls over the cliff edge (*Der heilige Berg*, Act VI: PS 73)

'Precipice' theme

2

rüttelt ihn *ff* nimmt Ziehharmonika *f* (mit Galgenhumor) verzerrt *Ob.*

„Hör auf mit deinem Irrsinn!“

1. 2.

„Hast was, woran Du hängst drunten bei dem Menschengesindel?“ *f* „Eine Tänzerin!“ *pp* Er 3

Diotima's theme

Vigo's theme

„Diotima!“ *p* 3 *Solo Viol.* „Du warst das!“ *ff* 4 *Fag. Br.* *Hr. Pos. Cello Cb.* *p* *sfz*

Ostinato D

kommt drohend auf Vigo zu *p* Vigo weicht zurück *p* immer mehr

stürzt ab *p* „Vigo!“ *ff* 2 mal Tusch in D *f* 'Precipice' theme *mf*

8^{te} Tanzabend Abgrund

Diegetic music

Rügner's analysis barely mentions the diegetic music in Meisel's score, yet the composer seizes every possible opportunity to include it, namely Diotima's two public dance performances in the hotel (Acts I and VI) and the frequent playing of an accordion by various characters. The accordion scenes are generally accompanied by a variety of *Ländler*, which may have been based on traditional sources, such is their authentic quality. Meisel's score switches between background music and diegetic music, just as one would expect an integrated sound-film score to operate.

Diotima's dance performances in the film used routines, costumes and sometimes the music from Riefenstahl's own repertoire as a dancer:

Brought up in the modern-dance style of Mary Wigman, [Riefenstahl] used to perform barefooted and clothed in flowing robes. Her repertory included items such as 'Dance to the Sea', 'Three Dances of Eros', 'Dance to Joy' and a cycle of lyric dances including titles such as 'Dream Blossom', 'Devotion' and 'Ave Maria'. (Prox 1995: 14)

Most of the dances mentioned above occur in the film. Before the film commenced on the evening of the premiere, Riefenstahl gave a live performance of her 'Dance to the Sea', together with an improvisation to an extract from Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony (Haf. 1926-12-18; Salkeld 1997: 37). Diotima performs her 'Dance to the Sea' twice in the film. The first occurrence is in the Prologue, set against the natural landscape of sea and rocks (beginning of Figure 6.1), and the second is her opening dance at the hotel performance in Act I, attended by 'The Friend' and Vigo. For the latter, Meisel abridged Benjamin Godard's Mazurka for piano, Op. 54 No. 2, in its original key.

There are two other dances from Riefenstahl's repertoire in this hotel performance: 'Traumblüte' ('Dream Blossom') and 'Hingebung' ('Devotion'), for which Meisel used Chopin's Nocturne in F sharp major, Op. 15 No. 2, and Prelude in D flat major, Op. 28 No. 15 ('Raindrop') respectively. There is also a 'Dance to Joy'

later in the plot, a new dance created by Diotima to show her love for ‘The Friend’. Meisel composed new material for this dance, which she performs at the hotel when he and Vigo are stranded in the storm. Whilst the nocturne is replicated virtually in its entirety, the prelude is reduced to mere suggestions, all exactly cut to the shots. Two uses of the Chopin extracts deserve special mention for their additional psychological and dramatic nuances. The first involves the ‘Raindrop’ Prelude for Diotima’s ‘Devotion’ dance. Two brief shots show only the end of this dance, accompanied by phrases from the end of the prelude (see Figures 6.4 and 6.5). Originally, these two shots must have been separated by a shot of ‘The Friend’ climbing the mountain and one of the majestic mountain, but the corresponding eight bars (containing a four-bar variation of his heroic theme and the ‘Mountain’ theme) are amongst the printed excisions in the score. Later, when Diotima asks the love-struck Vigo which of her dances he liked best, he takes her headscarf and puts it over his own head, in imitation of her ‘Devotion’ dance. This action is underscored with a third extract from the ‘Raindrop’ Prelude which had not been heard in the score (Figure 6.6, from end of third bar). Many in the audiences may have recognized these extracts, even though the ‘Raindrop’ prelude had not been played in its entirety. The piece was well known – an example of ‘cultural capital’ (Altman 2004: 377–8) – and also a popular staple of silent-film illustrations, as shown by its inclusion in Becce’s *Kinothek* series (Volume IIA, No. 16, published c. 1921).

6.4 Diotima’s ‘Devotion’ dance (*Der heilige Berg*, Act I: PS 16)

19 Cl. Ob. Hr. („Du..die sieht aus wie eine Heilige!“)

6.5 End of Diotima's 'Devotion' dance (*Der heilige Berg*, Act I: PS 17)

20 **Langsam**
Cello Viol. *pp*

riten.

6.6 Vigo imitates Diotima's 'Devotion' dance (*Der heilige Berg*, Act I: PS 18)

(„was hat Ihnen am besten gefallen?“)
Cl. Cello *mf*

The second nuanced use of a Chopin extract occurs in Act VI when ‘The Friend’ and Vigo shelter from the storm on an icy precipice. ‘The Friend’ is delirious with jealousy and raging over Diotima’s supposed betrayal. He has a vision of Diotima dancing, after which he plays the accordion and sings in a manic fashion. Meisel reprises the Nocturne theme for the accordion scene (in F major rather than the original key of F sharp major), marked as ‘distorted (with a grim sense of humour)’. This can be seen above in Figure 6.3, between rehearsal marks ‘2’ and ‘3’. Apart from some dissonant oboe interjections, the melody is nominally unblemished, so any further distortion may have been improvised. Imig’s first reconstruction intensified

the distortion through bitonality, which, he says, was inspired by the earlier ‘harmonic loading’ when ‘The Friend’ imagined Diotima dancing (Imig 1995: 17).

Early on in the film, Vigo briefly plays the accordion high up on a mountain crag, for which Meisel provided a seven-bar *Ländler*, exactly cut to the appropriate length of the shot. This is the only scene where the accordion is specified in the score (PS 10). In Act II, there is extended footage where Diotima dances to accordion music played by a shepherd, cuddles lambs, and greets a young boy who is playing a mouth organ. Imig found insufficient music to accommodate this section and resorted to repeating material from earlier in the act. He suggested that Riefenstahl may have smuggled this footage into the film after it was completed (Imig 1995: 17–18), but Fanck specifically mentions these scenes in his memoirs:

I still needed some Spring shots and various scenes with Trenker and Petersen. Leni Riefenstahl agreed . . . to go to the narcissus meadows in Lausanne with my camera student, Benitz. There they filmed delightful footage of Leni with tiny garlands in her hair, picking flowers, dandelion clocks, frolicking lambs, etc. A bit twee, but photographically very beautiful. (Fanck 1972: 160)

In Meisel’s score there is a sixteen-bar *Ländler* for this footage, ending with the instruction ‘*D.S. ad lib.*’ (PS 24). This implies that there was some considerable repetition of the material to provide apposite background music inspired by the diegetic music-making.

Simulated speech and vocal gestures

There are many examples in the score where the melodic lines and rhythms appear to have been inspired by spoken text rendered through intertitles (as they appear in the piano score), or by visibly mouthed words and vocal gestures made by the actors.

This quest for human expression has many antecedents, including the vox humana organ stop and the orchestral imitation of vocal gestures in ballet-pantomime. Some of Meisel’s examples have been collated in Table 6.1; those from pages 73 and 77 of the piano score can be examined more closely in Figures 6.3 and 6.8, where they have

been highlighted in grey. Sometimes the intertitles contain only one word or a name, as for example the numerous cries of ‘Vigo!’ by Diotima and ‘The Friend’, the latter after Vigo has fallen over the precipice. For these Meisel created simple two-note themes, as can be seen in the antepenultimate bar of Figure 6.3.

Meisel cited two examples of this special treatment of intertitle ‘dialogue’ in his *Ufa-Magazin* article, one from the end of the lovers’ first encounter (Act II) – the longest exchange of dialogue in the score – and the scene where the mountain climber discovers that Vigo is his rival (Act VI):

I was compelled to emphasize the dialogue for the encounter of the lovers . . . in an operatic manner according to the character of the expressions. For example:

She: “What does one seek, up there?” (feminine, gentle oboe)

He: “One’s self!” (masculine harsh trumpet)

Generally in a film, if a lyrical dialogue is introduced it can only be emphasized in such a manner. The intensive impression of the speech must be brought to the fore. Music unrelated to the action would serve no artistic purpose; it would detract from the impact of the film and have a disruptive rather than an enhancing effect. . . .

At the highpoint of the wildest snowstorm the mountain climber discovers that his friend [Vigo] is his rival. He exclaims; “Vigo! It was you!”
He rushes towards Vigo, who retreats and falls. (Meisel 1927-04-01)

Meisel’s example from Act VI has been reproduced in Figure 6.3 (see bar highlighted in grey before rehearsal mark ‘4’) and shows how he picked out the three words ‘Du warst das!’ via accentuated dissonances (minor or major second intervals). The example of the lovers’ encounter, reproduced in Figure 6.7, is more elaborate and includes the instruction ‘alles den Textarten entsprechend vortragen’ (all performed according to the manner of the text). Meisel used the speech rhythms from the written dialogue captions to create surrogate ‘vocal’ lines, matching each syllable to a note, suggesting gender through register and instrumentation, the melodic contour mirroring the emotional curve.

6.1 Examples of closely matched dialogue and vocal gestures in *Der heilige Berg*

Act	PS	Action	Dialogue	Match
I	18	Vigo and Diotima outside the hotel after her performance	Vigo answers "Ja" in response to her question	Exact
II	27	Diotima calls across the mountains to 'The Friend'	Four calls mouthed	Exact
IV	57	Diotima calls to Vigo after he wins the ski-race	"Vigo! Vigo!"	Exact
V	64	Vigo and 'The Friend' prepare to climb the great north face	"Was hast Du nur" (Vigo) "Nichts gegen Dich" ('The Friend')	Exact
VI	72	Diotima's maid arrives in her changing room	Descending octave trumpet call	Visual correlation unclear
	72	Vigo and 'The Friend' shelter on an icy precipice	"Komm zu dir, du bist doch wahnsinnig" (Vigo)	Exact
	73	'The Friend' discovers that it was Vigo he had seen with Diotima and cries out his name after he falls over the edge	"Du warst das!" "Vigo!"	Exact Exact
	76	'The Friend' shouts down to Vigo, dangling on the rope below	"Vigo, ich hätte Dir doch nichts getan!"	Nearly exact
	77	Theatre director interrupts Diotima's performance to announce that the two skiers are missing. Diotima pleads to the public for help	"Wer geht hinauf?" "Meinetwegen"	Exact
	78	The mother blames Diotima for what has happened	"War Dir die Eine nicht genug?"	Exact
VII	82	Vigo tells 'The Friend' to cut the rope and save himself	"Schneid' mich los - ich halt's nicht mehr aus!" "Rette Dich wenigstens selbst!"	Similar opening Exact Cf. 'Precipice' motif
	83	The mother wails before the crucifix	"Warum?"	Exact
	86	Diotima hallucinates that 'The Friend' has pushed Vigo over the edge and cries out his name	["Vigo!"] – mouthed	Exact
	87			
	87	The mother wails before the crucifix	"Warum?"	Exact
VIII	91	Diotima hears the terrible news about Vigo and thinks 'The Friend' pushed him over the edge	"Abgestürzt!" Diotima wails "Er hat ihn abgestürzt" Diotima wails	Similar Exact Similar Exact

These operatic exchanges give prominence to the melodic line by reducing the bass line to simple tremolos, but they also stand apart from the rest of the score due to their expressionistic, angular and more purely atonal (rather than merely dissonant) style, as for example in the augmented octave outlining the words ‘Und sonst nichts?’ in the sixth and tenth bars of Figure 6.7. It is unclear exactly how this section of the score would be aligned with the images in performance. Aligning each musical phrase with the beginning of the appropriate intertitle would leave extended pauses until the next intertitle is encountered. Although it might make more musical sense to align the music with the images of the speaker mouthing the words, that is to say after the intertitles, the similarity between the contours of Meisel’s phrases and the contents of the intertitles might then be harder for the audience to grasp.

6.7 Diotima meets ‘The Friend’ for the first time (*Der heilige Berg*, Act II: PS 28)

Lento

17 „Kommen Sie von da oben?“ „Es muß schön sein da oben.“ „Schön, hart und gefährlich!“

(alles den Textarten entsprechend vortragen)

„Und was sucht man da oben?“ „Sich selbst!“ „Und sonst nichts?“

„Und was suchen sie denn hier oben ... in der Natur?“ „Das Schö - - - - - ne!“ „Und sonst nichts?“

There is a lengthy dialogue scene towards the end of Act VI in which the hotel manager interrupts Diotima’s performance to inform the audience about the missing

mountaineers. This is demonstrated in Figure 6.8 from rehearsal mark ‘13’ onwards, which begins with the theme for ‘The Friend’, as the director explains the situation. Diotima then asks the audience for volunteers to rescue them. There is no change of scene, but Meisel still replicates the different camera shots, cutting between Diotima on the stage and the public in the auditorium. Shots of Diotima’s anxious face on hearing the news are represented by tremolo chords in a high register; as she pleads for help, fragments of her theme (Figure 6.8, bottom stave) alternate with some effective use of general pauses, during which the women in the audience urge their reluctant husbands to volunteer. Again, there is exact simulation of Diotima’s speech rhythms for “Wer geht hinauf? Meinetwegen!” (“Who will go? For my sake!”). These are highlighted in grey on the bottom stave of Figure 6.8.

A review published after the premiere of *Der heilige Berg* noted Meisel’s special treatment of certain intertitles:

Completely new – for our illustrators of the past almost revolutionary – is the musical scoring [*Vertonung*] of the intertitles. This concept will quickly set a precedent, provided that the intertitles also contain such profound or such sublime sentiments as here. (idl. 1926-12-18)

Vertonung could also be translated as ‘dubbing’, which in effect was Meisel’s intention: his music was acting as the microphone for the characters’ unheard dialogue. Meisel’s novel approach did not create a new fashion for writing film music in this manner, probably because it made live synchronization so difficult, but he did use the practice in his later scores for *The Crimson Circle* and *Der blaue Expreß*. With hindsight, even some of the few lines of dialogue in *Potemkin* may have inspired the rhythms in Meisel’s accompaniment. For example, Vakulinchuk’s shout prevents the firing squad from executing the mutineers and his dialogue line “Auf wen schießt ihr?” (“Who are you shooting at?”) is mirrored through a repeated fanfare figure (Figure 6.9).

6.8 Diotima discovers that 'The Friend' and Vigo are missing (*Der heilige Berg*, Act VI: PS 77)

12 Diotima tanzt
Ob.

Mutter

p (wiegend)

8^{va}

ten.

Abgrund

Foyer des Hotels

'Precipice' theme

ff

p

fz

pesante

p Fag.

Mutter weckt Pagen

Page ab.

Diotima tanzt

Direktor und Mutter

Tanz

poco lento (fromm)

p dolce

fz

p dolce

Direktor auf Bühne

„Unser Skimeister“ (Diotima)

„... nicht zurückgekehrt“

13 ^{Er}

p

fz

pp

Trp.

Diotima schreit auf.

Publikum unruhe

„Sind Bergsteiger unter Ihnen..“

fz

p

pp

Trp.

Diotima

Publikum schweigt

„Wer geht hinauf?“

Publikum „Meinetwegen!“

Publikum

Diotima's theme

14 Diotima's theme

G.P.

G.P.

G.P.

6.9 Example of simulated dialogue (*Potemkin*, Act II: PS 20)

The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely piano and another instrument. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom in bass clef. Both are in common time (C). The music consists of chords, with some triplets indicated by a '3' and a slur. The first staff has a dynamic marking of *ff*. Above the first staff, there are two phrases in German: „Brüder!“ and „Auf wen schießt ihr?“. A dashed line connects these phrases to the corresponding musical phrases. A box labeled 'L' is positioned above the first staff, and a '8va' marking is below it. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Similar musical surrogates for the human voice can be found in Hugo Riesenfeld's score for *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (dir. F. W. Murnau, 1927), which contains mournful horn calls as the farmer desperately calls for his missing wife, and in Albert Cazabon's score for *The Flag Lieutenant* (dir. Maurice Elvey, 1926), where a trumpet embodies Lascelle's shout (Brand 2002: 219). It is not coincidental that these examples come from composers with a background in music for the stage (Cazabon was the resident musical director for several London theatres and the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford between 1902 and 1927), and is indicative that the musical embodiment of (implied) speech has a long heritage.

Sound effects and musical illustrations

Compared with *Potemkin*, there are many more sound effects written directly into the score and made within the orchestra under the control of the conductor's baton. Most of these are achieved through varying combinations of loud accented chords, tremolos and rapid descending or ascending figurations as appropriate. For instance, in the Prologue, the waves crashing in time to Diotima's arm movements as she 'conducts' their motion (see last nine bars of Figure 6.1); 'The Friend' and Vigo jumping between mountain crags; skiers jumping; the starting orders for the ski race; the mountain metaphorically shattering when 'The Friend' discovers Diotima with another man; Vigo falling over the edge of the precipice (see first bar on last stave of Figure 6.3); applause for Diotima at her performances (usually a D major fanfare; see

the penultimate bar in Figure 6.3); the storm blowing doors open in the mother's house and the ski-lodge; triplet figures for someone knocking on a door; the exploding crucible in the ice palace; and 'The Friend' taking his final steps and falling over the precipice to his death (see last two bars of Figure 6.10). Presumably the variety of percussion instruments provided extra definition to some of these moments: it is likely that the siren was employed to generate wave noises, as in *Potemkin*; the broken crockery may have recreated the mountain shattering into pieces and the exploding crucible in the ice-palace. There are also some purely programmatic effects: rapid semi-quaver movement for rippling water (as in the opening of Figure 6.1), and a modulation to C major for the sunrise, etc. The latter is illustrated in the opening of Figure 6.10.

6.10 'The Friend' steps to his death (*Der heilige Berg*, Act VIII: PS 90)

As would later become emblematic of American animated cartoons in the sound era, Meisel's technique 'blur[red] the distinctions between the sound elements by using music as a sound effect and orchestrating all the elements into a continuous musical track' (Curtis 1992: 199).

For the storm impeding the ascent of the north face of the mountain (Act V), which ultimately forces 'The Friend' and Vigo to shelter on an icy precipice, Meisel uses an ascending ostinato sequence (discussed below). Coinciding with the start of this ostinato is a footnote which states that 'From this point there should be thunder at each avalanche, stronger or weaker according to its size – free in tempo' (see Figure 6.13). The thunder and wind machines would have been freely employed at this point. Later, when Diotima struggles through the blizzards and avalanches in order to

reach the ski lodge, additional clarinet and oboe lines imitate the flurries of snow and hazardous conditions.

Rising sequences

Meisel reverted to his famous *Potemkin* style – that is to say simple repeating patterns which are continually transposed upwards by semitones – on numerous occasions in the score, summarized in Table 6.2. The information has been structured to identify four distinct ostinato groups, labelled A, B, C and D.

6.2 Ostinati groups in *Der heilige Berg*

	Act	Pages in piano score	Scene Description
A	II	26–7	Diotima's first mountain ascent
B	IV	43–57	Long distance ski-race
C	V	65–71	'The Friend' and Vigo climb the north-face of Monte Santo
	VI	72	'The Friend' and Vigo shelter from the storm on an icy precipice
	VII	79, 80, 81, 82, 83	Diotima climbs the mountain to alert a rescue team
	VIII	90	The rescue team arrives too late to save 'The Friend' before he steps to his death
D	VI	73	'The Friend' approaches Vigo in a threatening manner, causing him to fall
	VII	86, 87	Diotima hallucinates that 'The Friend' has pushed Vigo over the edge

The function of the rising sequences is primarily to recreate bodily sensations in the audience so that they become part of the drama. The (pleasant) sensation of moving upwards when Diotima first climbs the mountain on a beautiful spring day (ostinato A) contrasts with the protracted anxiety of the various people climbing the north-face of the mountain during the storm (ostinato C). Anticipating twenty-first-century IMAX presentations, the audience follows the eye of the camera during Fanck's thrilling ski race at various speeds from slow-motion ski-jumps to fast-motion downhill racing (ostinato B). Finally, there is the fear experienced by Vigo as he backs away from 'The Friend' on the precipice, reprised during Diotima's hallucinations that 'The Friend' has pushed Vigo over the edge (ostinato D). Sample bars from ostinati groups A, B and C are reproduced in Figures 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13

respectively. Ostinato D can be viewed in Figure 6.3, starting on the antepenultimate stave.

6.11 Ostinato A (*Der heilige Berg*, Act II: PS 26)

Diotima steigt aufwärts

mf Viol. Hr. 3

ff Viol. Hr. 3 Cl.

Pos. Berg immer höher

6.12 Ostinato B (*Der heilige Berg*, Act IV: PS 43)

brilliant Viol. Holzbl.

f Viol. Hr. 3

Pos.

6.13 Ostinato C (*Der heilige Berg*, Act V: PS 65)

Cello Fg. Aufstieg

pp pesante Pos.

8^{mo}

*) Ab hier Donner bei jeder Lawine je nach ihrer Größe stärker oder schwächer – frei im Tempo

The ski-race in Act IV (ostinato B) presents an ideal opportunity for ‘hurry’ music, a genre found in nineteenth-century melodramas and silent-cinema accompaniment, especially for chase scenes. For Meisel, the ski-race was ‘the most rewarding spot in the score’ (Meisel 1927-04-01), primarily because it was an extended scene based in one location. The ski-race ostinato accounts for fifteen pages or about one-sixth of the piano score, but the ostinato is interrupted intermittently by moments requiring precise synchronization and skilled conducting. There is one three-bar cut to ‘The

Friend', climbing higher up the mountain and thinking about Diotima below (the score briefly alluding to their two themes), but there are also various leaps by the different skiers to co-ordinate, and, at the end, applause for Vigo and Diotima calling Vigo's name. Contemporaneous reviewers were divided about the success of the ski-race accompaniment. Meisel's friend, Feld, was enthusiastic: 'The great race forms the high point of the music. Here Meisel uses the simplest means, inventing a repeated sequence which is constantly transposed, which achieves powerful effects with its rhythmic accompaniment' (Haf. 1926-12-18). By contrast, Franz Wallner condemned the endless and seemingly aimless ostinato as 'Sysiphus music' (Wallner 1926-12-21), whilst Erdmann – acknowledging that the director was to blame for the length of the scene – said that Meisel 'ran aground' at this point: 'One cannot keep playing one sound for ten minutes (or more?): artistically unimaginable!' (Erdmann 1926-12-31).

The first occurrence of the ostinato in Group C begins as 'The Friend' and Vigo ascend the mountain during the storm. Rather than exactly following Fanck's cross-cutting and changing the music to match any scene changes (as was his normal practice), Meisel maintains the ostinato, alluding to the changes by superimposing appropriate themes. Therefore when the anxious Diotima paces up and down in her dressing room before her performance, wondering where her beloved might be, her theme cuts through the chromatic rumblings (illustrated in Rügner 1988: 354–5). The ostinati in groups A, B and C are generally transposed every bar or every two bars, creating tension and excitement over long time spans to match Fanck's editing. By contrast, the brief scenes of fear – as expressed by Vigo when he backs away from 'The Friend' and by Diotima during her hallucinations – are represented by a more rapid chromatic ascent, rising every crotchet beat (ostinato D). The ostinato in group D is really an embellished chromatic scale, composed in a pianistic, quasi-improvisatory manner.

Morris was intrigued why Meisel's *Potemkin*-style ostinato – the machine music associated with the battleship's engines as it sailed against the squadron – occurred so frequently in a nature film. There is an obvious lack of such machines or signs of technology in *Der heilige Berg*, although modern transport and the latest camera technology enabled the shooting of the film. For Morris, the presence of this machine music was entirely justifiable:

The musical signifiers of nature inherited from the nineteenth century are so often about a circular motion—motion that is at the same time static—and this carries with it an impression of timelessness, as though the cyclical temporality of nature resisted the linearity of the human and rational. Typical musical features include ostinati, a constant flow of sound, circular motion, what Meisel calls 'self-perpetuating sequences'. But these are all features of his machine music as well. Circularity, repetition, and a loss of goal orientation are the very characteristics with which Meisel constructs the 'rhythm of our times'. It is not far, then, from the spinning flywheel to the rushing stream, as though the millwheel, that archetypal Romantic image of the engagement between nature and technology, still cast a shadow over modernism long after its function had been rendered obsolete by the factory. (Morris 2008: 81)

Morris was inspired by Meisel's *Ufa-Magazin* article, in which the composer described

the new style in my music: the Film-Music-drama. Here modern music has fertile soil, it gives everyone a vivid representation in combination with the images; it alone corresponds to the nervous pulse of our time, which requires total disassociation from the restraints of tradition, demanding rhythms which whip you up into a frenzy ['nervenaufpeitschenden Rhythmen']. (Meisel 1927-04-01)

Meisel wrote this article some months after he had completed *Der heilige Berg*, at a time when he was already working on his next score for Ruttmann's *Berlin*.

Ruttmann's film was undeniably about the modern machine age, for which Meisel eschewed a melodic approach in favour of mechanical rhythms and a literal recreation of the city's soundscape. Meisel appears to have been caught up in the jargon and excitement associated with his new project. Whilst making great claims for his modern style, Meisel's ostinati employed one of the oldest means known to

composers and one guaranteed to create tension and empathy: state a thematic idea and repeat the same idea a tone or semitone higher (the *incrementum* of musical-rhetorical figures, discussed above). In this manner, rather than being detached and modernistic, Meisel's ostinato in *Potemkin* had functioned as a 'generalised image of the collective heartbeat of the battleship's crew' (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 238), enveloping the audience in the drama. The ostinati in *Der heilige Berg* had a similar purpose.

Cross-cutting to demonstrate parallel action

A distinguishing feature of this film is the often rapid cross-cutting between opposing locations to demonstrate parallel action, or even between different people within one location. This is most apparent during Act VI, where action on the precipice ('The Friend' and Vigo sheltering from the storm) alternates with the mother fetching help for her son and the hotel stage where Diotima is performing her dances. Fanck's 'wanton cross-cutting' was apparently the reason that the composer was often unable to develop his music, as Meisel felt duty-bound to mirror each scene change (Haf. 1926-12-18). Meisel made great claims for the manner in which he copied all the cross-cutting in his music, namely that he had created an artistic fusion, where the score and film were co-dependent:

In sharp contrast to [the scenes on the precipice] are the bizarre sounds emanating from the hotel below where his beloved is performing. – As one sees: in the smallest detail the same plot and treatment in the film as in the music, there in images – here in sounds. For the musician [the action] is also obvious without the film, likewise the director inwardly experiences the music for his film. For the audience one without the other is a half-measure. In this way I have constructed the new style in my music: the Film-Music-drama.

(Meisel 1927-04-01)

Meisel is referring to sections where the music 'follows the rhythm of the film's editing almost parasitically. The music intercuts itself very frequently and at an often frenetic pace: again and again a new shot is taken as a cue to switch gears musically'

(Morris 2008: 81). At their most extreme, Meisel's 'gear changes' occur every bar, as demonstrated in the third stave of Figure 6.8 for the alternations between material for the mother and Diotima's dancing (although the fermatas at the end of each bar suggest some degree of *ad libitum* in performance).

Meisel's close adherence to dramatic detail in *Der heilige Berg* marks him as a forerunner to Steiner and Korngold. For example, these descriptions of Steiner's mickey-mousing and Korngold's rapid alternation of motivic ideas fit Meisel perfectly:

In the extensive musical score [for *King Kong*], . . . Steiner all but tells the story in music. If someone climbs a wall or a tree, the music goes up; if someone falls from a log, scale figures descend rapidly. . . .

[Korngold] . . . took the use of leitmotif in cinema as far as it could possibly go. . . . In *The Sea Hawk* [dir. Michael Curtiz, 1940], he devises a leitmotif for almost everything one can think of . . .

Few films have ever been given such an overwhelming musical score, as it hits us forcefully during the opening titles, shifts from leitmotif to leitmotif rapidly as the people or things they represent appear on screen, and offers lots of rhythmic or pitch coordination with screen action (such as a descending scale accompanying an object thrown into the water) . . . [I]n a space of three minutes and forty seconds, [Korngold] alternates among the leitmotifs as many as fourteen times, sometimes holding a particular one for no more than one or two seconds. Instead of playing together they occur sequentially, but the quick alternations provide a musical palate that blends different leitmotifs together almost as one.

(Schroeder 2002: 78 and 79–80)

The reference to 'rhythmic or pitch coordination with screen action' in Korngold's score to *The Sea Hawk* corresponds exactly to the isomorphic and iconic uses of sound discussed by Curtis (1992: 201–2). Meisel differs from Steiner and Korngold in his apparent inability or unwillingness to weave multiple leitmotifs and moments of close synchronization into a continuous musical web, preferring instead to interrupt the flow and end one musical idea before starting another one. Because of this trait, Rügner defined Meisel's music as 'roughly joined together, if not downright

sloppily composed' (Rügner 1988: 190). By contrast, Morris suggested that this lack of smoothness between musical edits is a sign of the composer's modernism:

Meisel's music can be interpreted as highlighting the edits by forming itself 'around' rather than 'through' them. Meisel's approach is easily dismissed as a naïve prototype of film scoring technique, one which would be improved upon. His practice in *Der heilige Berg* often comes uncomfortably close to an orchestral version of a poor cinema pianist, who reacts to each shot with the first musical idea that pops into his/her head. But it complicates the synchronized vs. contrapuntal binary that would soon preoccupy film music theory, resituating aspects of so-called synchronized scoring (associated above all with Hollywood practice) as gestures toward music-film counterpoint. (Morris 2008: 82)

This hypothesis is in agreement with my suggestion in the discussion of *Potemkin*, above, that Meisel's audio-visual relationships, where the sound emitted does not match the expected sound or where sound is emitted when no sound would be expected, are examples of audio-visual counterpoint. It also concurs with the discussion regarding parallelism and anti-continuity in Buhler and Neumeyer (1994: 381), particularly where Morris concludes that

The effect of this close parallelism on the *film* is to create a disjointed, episodic quality, further accentuating its melodramatic character. The effect on the *music* is actually to give each cue a soundbite quality and stifle any sense of its own momentum or unfolding. The score becomes a series of sound images, snapshots in music that have the effect of a musical slideshow. Just as each musical image appears, it is supplanted by the next musical block. Any sense of dynamism is generated not within each image but by their succession, by the almost Stravinsky-like way the musical blocks are arranged in sequence. The 'rhythm of our times' turns out to be the rhythm of cinematic editing.

(Morris 2008: 83)

By 'cutting' his motivic ideas to match Fanck's cinematic editing, Meisel's score has the visual appearance of musical nonsense, lacking structure and logic. This is not to say, however, that these joins are always apparent during the momentum of live performance. If Meisel's exact synchronization requirements are met, many transitions will be completely inaudible or at least less abrupt than they appear on the

page. The total aural effect should be an entirely apposite and dramatic blueprint, underpinning every significant action.

Lasting impressions: hypermodernism or kitsch lyricism?

Based on the surviving piano score and Imig's reconstruction, Meisel's score to *Der heilige Berg* appears to be one of his most melodious works (perhaps verging on overblown sentimentality for twenty-first-century tastes) as this reviewer noted:

And yet again and again melodies catch you unawares, Meisel's songs delight.
For example, in the alpine meadow, the *ländler*. (idl. 1926-12-18)

Yet appearances can be deceptive and some contemporaneous reviews indicate a radically different perception of Meisel's score, where the lasting impression was of something incomprehensibly 'modern', with noisy, infernal drumming instead of melodiousness:

In places the well-known composer underscores the action in a manner which generally satisfies the cinema-going public. It must be said however, that there will be generally no appreciation in the average and smaller towns for the modern conception [of the score], which is specially to be noticed in the harsh accentuation of the timpani and drums. (*Der Kinematograph* 1926-12-19)

[Meisel's score] is apparently somewhat hyper-modern. One hears too many timpani and drums, too many motifs and too little melody. One has the feeling that this artistic rhythmicity sometimes overwhelms the image. . . . [The] cinema, the theatre of the masses, is on no account the place for such tone poems. (Aros 1926-12-20)

The Berlin critics would make similar complaints about the infernal hammering of percussion in his scores to *Berlin* and *October*, which again tended to obliterate memories of any moments of lyricism (see Part 3). Given that the use of a battery of percussion instruments and noise-generating implements is one of Meisel's trademarks, it is frustrating that there is only a handful of direct indications in the piano score to *Der heilige Berg*: one for timpani (PS 3), one for triangle (PS 5; see

end of fourth stave in Figure 6.1, above), three for cymbals (PS 5, 6 and 8); and one for the accordion (PS 10). In addition, there is the footnote indicating that thunder effects should be generated during the storm and avalanche in Act V (PS 65; see Figure 6.13, above). The contemporaneous reviews make it clear that there was much more use of timpani, drums and other noise effects than is apparent in the surviving piano score, particularly during the extended ostinato sequences.

Part Three

1927–1928:

Rhythm and Noise

7 *Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*: Extrinsic Modernism

Ruttmann's optical music

[*Berlin*] has consistently been regarded as a documentary film and has been classified as an example of 'Neue Sachlichkeit' (The New Objectivity). . . . The false judgement led Kracauer and an entire later school of film historians to decry the work as superficial, politically irresponsible and dangerous. They defamed it as a 'cross-section film', and even as a predecessor of Leni Riefenstahl's productions for the Nazis.

But we must not lose sight of the fact that *Berlin* is anything but a documentary film. It is an abstract film. . . . *Berlin* is a radical experiment in montage and it takes merely its raw material from images of the city of Berlin, arranging them chronologically in the pattern of one whole day in the life of the city. (Schobert 2003: 242–3)

Ruttmann was one of several European artists who used cinematography – specifically stop-frame animation techniques – to bring motion to their graphic, abstract ideas. In his 1919 essay 'Malerei mit der Zeit' ('Painting with the Medium of Time'), Ruttmann advocated

a new method of expression, one different from all the other arts, a medium of time. An art meant for our eyes, one differing from painting in that it has a temporal dimension (like music) . . . This new art-form will give rise to a totally new kind of artist, one whose existence has only been latent up to now, one who will more or less occupy a middle-ground between painting and music.

. . . [There are] endless possibilities of employing light and darkness, stillness and action, straight lines and curves, heavy masses and finely nuanced shapes in all their countless gradations and combinations. This new art form will not of course address itself to today's movie-goers. Nevertheless, one can count on its attracting a considerably larger group of people than painting does, due to the fact that this art form is much more active than painting (because something actually happens). (Schobert 1989: 102–4; 104)

Ruttmann was the first artist to put the idea of abstract film into practice with *Lichtspiel Opus 1*, first shown in Frankfurt and Berlin in April 1921, the latter

presentation having a special accompaniment for string quintet composed by Max Butting (Schobert 2003: 238). Unlike the work of his colleagues Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling, Ruttmann's abstract films achieved a degree of commercial success and led to collaborations in mainstream motion pictures: for example, the falcon dream sequence in *Die Nibelungen* (Teil I, 1924), the animated backgrounds to Lotte Reiniger's silhouette film *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed* (1924–6), and advertising films for Julius Pinschewer (Goergen 1989: 106, 111–13). In May 1925, the *Novembergruppe*, an association of painters and musicians, presented a programme of avant-garde films in Berlin's Ufa-Palast entitled 'Der absolute Film'. This programme included *Film ist Rhythmus* (dir. Hans Richter, 1921), the public premieres of Ruttmann's *Opus 2*, *3* and *4*, and two French avant-garde films (Schobert 2003: 241–3). The presentation marked a turning point for Ruttmann and Richter, neither of whom ever made an 'absolute' film again. Schobert has suggested two reasons for this. Firstly, the two French films, *Images mobiles* (dir. Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, 1923/1924) and *Entr'acte* (dir. René Clair, 1924), 'opened Ruttmann's and Richter's eyes to the fact that one could make abstract, non-narrative films not only with animated images but also with real photography'; secondly, Eisenstein's *Potemkin* 'began a revolution that changed the entire concept of filmmaking', revealing montage to be the most important means of cinematic expression (Schobert 2003: 242). Out of these artistic awakenings, Ruttmann forged his abstract impressions of daily life in Berlin's modern metropolis: *Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*.

Images mobiles was an early version of *Un Ballet mécanique* (Elder 2008: 163). *Berlin* and *Ballet mécanique* share a fascination with patterns of mechanical movement generated by manufactured objects (the movements at times achieved artificially through stop-frame animation techniques). Ruttmann generated similar patterns via choreographed movements of humans (typically disembodied legs) and animals. These may have been inspired by the slow-motion running of the mourners

or the scenes of a disembodied ballerina (her dancing shot from below through a plate of glass) in *Entr'acte*. The scurrying panorama seen from the train in the opening of *Berlin* also pays homage to similar shots in the finale of *Entr'acte* (as the mourners chase the runaway hearse) and both films have vertiginous shots of the roller coaster at their respective Luna Parks in Berlin and Paris. Most of the films at the *Novembergruppe* presentation were screened without accompaniment (Gerle 2008) and it is unlikely that Ruttmann (or Meisel) had any direct knowledge of the scores devised by Antheil and Satie. However, there are pertinent comparisons to be made between these scores and Meisel's *Berlin*, included in the analytical discussion below.

In July 1926, Fox-Europa announced that Ruttmann had been hired to create two *Bildsinfonien* (image symphonies) on the themes of 'Berlin' and 'Sport' (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1926-07-03). Exactly when and how Meisel received his *Berlin* commission is unknown, but Ruttmann's admiration for *Potemkin* would have made Meisel an obvious choice. Shooting commenced in August 1926 (*Film-Kurier* 1926-08-20) and Meisel worked closely with Ruttmann for some months during the editing stage, at least from March 1927. When Meisel wrote his *Ufa-Magazin* article for the general release of *Der heilige Berg* at the beginning of April 1927, he concluded with some news of his latest work on *Berlin*, which would be

a conglomeration of all the sounds of a cosmopolitan city. For the first time in an ideal manner, film and music are going hand in hand from the outset, a work is generated collectively by director and composer. I intend to create a symphony of our capital city, which – detached from the film – should also be performed in the concert hall, and moreover I am writing it in the rhythm of our times through the use of completely new means and instruments. (Meisel 1927-04-01)

From Meisel's later descriptions, the manner in which he collaborated with Ruttmann prefigured the working relationship between Eisenstein and Prokofiev during *Nevsky* in the late 1930s. Meisel described how some of his score was even composed before the film had taken shape (*Film-Kurier* 1927-06-11). Moreover, his film music was considered to be a primary element of the production, the director working together

with the composer on the final form of the film and adjusting ‘whole image clusters in the interest of their coincidence with musical intensifications and on several occasions subordinat[ing] the sequence of cuts according to the structure of the music’ (Zielesch 1928-02-26). This was Meisel’s ideal manner of working and one which he advocated in his press comments. There is also a whimsical description of how Meisel, in preparing for his score, ‘spent hour after hour listening to the sounds of the city, noting the tempi of the noises, the jangling bells of the trams, the car horns, the rhythm of the nocturnal work on the rails’ (Zielesch 1928-02-26). His ultimate aim, expressed in press releases and in the programme notes handed out at the premiere, was not to write music but to make *eine Lautbarmachung* (Meisel 1927-09-22; Olimsky 1927-09-24). This term, through difficult to translate, equates to an acoustic representation of the film. As such, it was the manifestation of the theoretical principles he had advocated before *Potemkin*: ‘[Film] music must bring to life each street noise, reproduce the sounds of machinery, etc., in order to help the spectator towards a realistic experience’ (Meisel 1925-09-19).

Berlin was granted authorization for public screening on 11 June 1927 and press notices announced that its premiere was imminent; one report even gave the fixed date and venue of 17 June at the Gloria-Palast (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1927-06-09). Although Meisel’s score was also ready (*Film-Kurier* 1927-06-11), the Berlin premiere was delayed until the autumn season, possibly to have more impact. It was one of Meisel’s greatest desires to be able to replicate performances of his original film music at cinemas of all sizes. The first step was to have his music published, but that still did not guarantee its universal use or that the performance would be accurately synchronized. Advance press notices for *Berlin* mentioned that Carl Robert Blum’s Music-Chronometer would be used to synchronize image and music (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1927-06-25). Several such inventions were patented during the 1920s, for example Pierre de la Commune’s ‘cinépupitre’ (London 1936: 68), which Honegger used for *La Roue* (dir. Abel Gance, 1923). Blum’s invention was an

electrical tachometer which, when coupled to the film projector, enabled music to be exactly replicated in live performance according to pre-determined tempi (see London 1936: 64–6). He had first demonstrated his invention in public at the Urania Institute, Berlin, in December 1926, for which he published a technical manual (Blum 1926). This manual also contained some letters of expert evaluation, including one from Meisel, which repeats his artistic penchant for exact illustration:

Film music of artistic value demands intensive attention to detailed illustration of the object, the most unflinching concordance of the intended image effect and the music effect. An invention – Blum’s Music-Chronometer – offers a secure guarantee of reaching this goal at last . . .

(Blum 1926: letters inserted between pages 40 and 43)

One of the earliest commercial uses of Blum’s invention was for a special film of the glacier in the premiere production of Krenek’s opera *Jonny spielt auf* at Leipzig in February 1927 (Gayda 1993), and during the subsequent production at Dresden (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1927-06-25). The Music-Chronometer also featured in the ‘Musik und Film’ presentation at the Baden-Baden festival, July 1927, synchronizing Eisler’s new score to Ruttmann’s *Opus 3* and Hindemith’s score for a Felix the Cat cartoon, *Felix at the Circus* (Böhm 1927-07-30). Hindemith supposedly had severe problems rehearsing his cartoon score with Blum’s apparatus (Skelton 1975: 91–2), an experience shared by Meisel. Whilst reviews of *Berlin*’s premiere and advertisements for the first few performances at the Taubentzen-Palast mention the use of Blum’s invention (Friedländer 1927-09-25; Erdmann 1927-10-01; *Lichtbild-Bühne* 1927-09-24), it appears that Meisel did not use the apparatus during the public performances. The equipment had broken down frequently during rehearsals, causing Meisel much heartache, and he was forced to abandon its use altogether during the dress rehearsal (Meisel 1928-07-03; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 70–1).

Premiere and reception

Ruttman's first feature-length film was finally screened on 23 September 1927 at the Tauentzien-Palast with an accompanying programme of short films from the late 1900s, complete with a script recited by a lecturer, as had been the norm in the early twentieth century. This stark comparison helped to emphasise the modernity of *Berlin*, in which the audience was bombarded with a rapid succession of images showing a day in the life of the city. This was closely matched by an aural assault performed by a 75-man orchestra, including small groups of players positioned strategically around the auditorium for special effects. Meisel's published comments and reviews of the *Berlin* premiere provide some additional information regarding the orchestra, although accounts regarding the spatial distribution of the players are often conflicting:

Technical instruments will play an important role in the accompaniment, thus the score stipulates the following new sound-producing agents hardly used until now as supporting voices: an engine, a siren, iron rods, metal sheets, an anvil, and some tuned car horns. (Film-Kurier 1927-05-12)

There are rumours of the use of some typewriters and accumulators . . . (Feld 1927-09-24)

[The orchestra] included a jazz-combo, banjo, celesta and a quarter-tone keyboard. (t. 1927-09-28)

[a] solo violin, . . . jazz ensemble . . . [and a] quarter-tone keyboard . . . (Schmidl 1927-09-26)

[The orchestra included] a jazz band, six tuba players and a group of quarter tone instruments.

The musicians were distributed throughout the hall: some he placed in the balcony on the right, others on the left, and still others under the roof, so that during moments of climax the audience had the sensation of being surrounded by sound. Moreover, he invented for the occasion original sound instruments, including a futuristic device that was capable of imitating claxons, trains, motor-cars or shrieks, either *pianissimo* or *fortissimo*. (Blakiston 1929-02-11)

the symphony orchestra was in the pit, whilst a quarter-tone trio and a jazz-combo played in the left and right balconies respectively; some solo trumpeters were positioned at the back of the auditorium. (Prox 1987)

Blakiston [Oswell Blakeston] received his information directly from Meisel, when he met the composer in London during 1929 (see Chapter 10). He mentioned Meisel's inventions for creating different sound-effects; it is possible that one of these was a prototype for the sound-effects desk Meisel used to record his incidental music for the production of *Schwejk* in January 1928, or even the same invention (see Chapter 8). The ability of the 'futuristic device' to recreate transport noises either *pianissimo* or *fortissimo* is similar to the *intonarumori* (noise intoners) constructed by the Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo in the previous decade. Russolo's inventions were designed to demonstrate the theories in his manifesto, *The art of noises* (1913), concerning the creation of music using everyday sounds. Ruttmann, as a painter, would have known about the Futurist movement and may also have read the manifesto. The following extract might have been written to describe *Berlin*:

Let us cross a great modern capital with our ears more alert than our eyes, and we will get enjoyment from distinguishing the eddying of water, air and gas in metal pipes, the grumbling of noises that breathe and pulse with indisputable animality, the palpitation of valves, the coming and going of pistons, the howl of mechanical saws, the jolting of a tram on its rails, the cracking of whips, the flapping of curtains and flags. We enjoy creating mental orchestrations of the crashing down of metal shop blinds, slamming doors, the hubbub and shuffling of crowds, the variety of din, from stations, railways, iron foundries, spinning wheels, printing works, electric power stations and underground railways.

(Apollonio 1973: 74–88; 85)

There was also renewed interest in creating and using microtonal instruments during the 1920s, although quarter-tone keyboards were by no means a recent invention. For *Berlin*, Meisel allegedly employed a quarter-tone harmonium manufactured by 'Pfortener' (*Film-Kurier* 1927-06-04), although the manufacturer is more likely to have been Förster (see Table 2 in Davies 2001b). Quarter-tone tuning was evidently

Meisel's latest craze, since he also used some in his incidental music to *Hoppla, wir leben!*, which had its premiere on 3 September 1927 at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz a few weeks before the release of *Berlin* (see Feld 1927-09-05).

The evidence regarding the spatial separation of instruments, when compared with the instrumentation indicated in the score, suggests that Meisel separated groups of players who were re-creating diegetic music or specific recurring sound effects. The trumpeters played a rising fifth motif every time a traffic policeman restarts the chaos of Berlin's traffic. The quarter-tone harmonium and a solo violin replicated the sounds emanating from two courtyard musicians playing similar instruments, and the jazz-combo accompanied the revelries of Berlin nightlife. Meisel had declared his intention to have these 'surround sound' effects in his press statements (*Film-Kurier* 1927-05-12). These experiments in spatial separation must have been a success, because Karl Freund, one of the leading cameramen involved in shooting *Berlin*, later claimed these experiments had been his idea:

As for sound . . . I felt the need of it myself when I was making *Berlin*. During the first presentation I put ten men from the orchestra in the gallery, and distributed another ten men in the boxes so that there was in the auditorium the actual sensation of being surrounded by sound. In fact, I may claim that *Berlin* was almost the first of the sound pictures. (Freund, quoted in Blakeston 1929-01: 58-9)

The premiere showing to the press was a resounding success, to the extent that the owner of the Tauentzien-Palast sanctioned a further performance to the public that evening (Goergen 1989: 27). The film ran for several weeks with Meisel's accompaniment (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1927-10-01) and by mid-October Fox-Europa was marketing the film as 'The unparalleled success! Playing at 90 theatres' (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1927-10-15).

Many critics praised the symbiosis between film and music:

. . . soldiers, the underground railway, men, rhythm, work, the street, factory, office, business – Berlin. The interweaving of these images is an amazing song, Ruttman sees it, reflects it, cuts it. Meisel sings it. (Hirsch 1927-09-24)

Image and music are a single symphonic sorcery, generated together so inseparably, that, out of pure self-defence against this interlocking duality, one willingly sees with the ears and hears with the eyes . . . (m a 1927-09-24)

Out of the aggregation of film and music a new category has been produced: effect music, or . . . photographed music. (t. 1927-09-28)

This music matches the film in an ideal manner. Music? No, it is not music in the general sense but only an almost exclusively effective, very effective, instrumented rhythmicity. . . .

This music . . . is descriptive and nothing more, but interesting. Interesting above all precisely for the reason that it highlights all the musical components which might be brought to greater effect under other circumstances – namely the feature film. One should be grateful to Edmund Meisel that he had the courage to implement a principle without making concessions. We now know that film can be served in detail by such music. (Erdmann 1927-10-01)

However, there were also complaints about the monotony and deafening effect of the music (Friedländer 1927-09-25; A. W. 1927-09-24; R. 1927-09-25), or the paucity of quiet points in the film and corresponding lack of lyrical moments in the music (Erdmann 1927-10-01; Br. 1927-10-24).

Meisel's *Berlin* score also generated much discussion regarding the overall purpose of film music, particularly amongst those involved with the film music presentations at Baden-Baden (see Chapter 9). Three leading critics writing in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* – Herbert Ihering, Heinrich Strobel and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt – cast the longest shadows over the reception of Meisel's *Berlin* score and the composer's reputation:

Away from the film, away from the sequence of images – and the music should only be judged in this manner – [Meisel's music] is grim. The film and stage music to *Hoppla, wir leben* was already a disappointment. . . . However, yesterday . . . material factors against Meisel were revealed. In *Potemkin* the rhythmic structure of the music was fascinating. On the Piscator stage this rhythm already appeared to be running dry. And with the *Berlin* film it became clear that Meisel generally only had a rhythmic scheme, nothing further. The approach to Berlin, the awakening of activity, and the advance of the workers

were effective with the music. Meisel destroyed and hammered against all the curves, all the elegant transitions, the musicality of the editing. The film: an abundance of riches. The music: a poverty of ideas. . . . Meisel achieved something fabulous with *Potemkin*. But now he has come to a standstill. Today film music needs other pioneers.

(Ihering 1927-09-24; reproduced in Ihering 1959: 539–40)

The potpourri method is unthinkable for *Goldrush* or *Berlin*. Even the film industry has realized this. They recognize that the artistic film cannot exist without its own especially composed music. However they have not yet found the man who is completely clear about looking at the problem. For example: the *Berlin*-film. Rhythm is the keyword. So Meisel allows rhythms to spit, to bounce, to pound. However in reality that is not a rhythmic event. Only a meaningless accumulation of noises, of embarrassingly naturalistic effects, which clobber the film in places, destroying its wonderful dynamic. A quarter-tone keyboard and saxophones do not constitute the present day. In spite of its extrinsic modernity, this music differs not in the slightest from the usual illustration practice.

(Strobel 1927-09-29)

A man called Edmund Meisel in Berlin demonstrates with admirable perseverance how one should not [write film music]. He achieved world records in musical futility in the illustrations to *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin* and Ruttmann's *Berlin* (which he ruined), evidently based on the perverse aesthetic principle that music will be especially beautiful when it is combined with much noise.

(Stuckenschmidt 1928-05-25; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 71)

There are echoes of Ihering's review in Eisenstein's later appraisal of Meisel, namely that the composer 'got stuck in the rut of rhythm as such' (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 238). Kurt Weill also joined in the debate, aligning himself unequivocally with those who believed that film music should have an autonomous musical form rather than sacrificing itself to the minutiae of the film's dramatic content (see his interview by Eisner 1927-10-13; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 63–4).

Extant sources and reconstructions

In addition to the manuscript score and parts which Meisel prepared for the premiere, there was a printed arrangement made for smaller orchestral forces (Meisel 1927-09-

20). Out of these sources, all that survives of Meisel's acoustic *tour de force* is a single copy of the printed piano score (Meisel 1927a). This is currently housed in the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin, and was acquired from Feld in 1980. The piano score is divided into five acts, corresponding to the structure of Ruttmann's film. As with the piano score for *Der heilige Berg*, the *Berlin* piano score often contains an additional treble stave above the piano part, indicating some additional cues and orchestration. Since *Berlin* was produced by the American Fox company, it is possible that the orchestration was out-sourced, as Goslar (2007; see Ruttmann 2008) assumed. More tangible proof, potentially in the Fox archives in America, would be needed to corroborate this assertion.

There is as yet no comprehensive analysis of Meisel's *Berlin* score, in either German or English. Only six pages of the *Berlin* score have been published: the opening of the score (Goergen 1989: 117); page 13 (Manvell and Huntley 1957: 58; Motte-Haber and Emons 1980: 62); and the front cover, foreword, page 130 and back cover (Ruttmann 2008, ROM section, disc 2). The foreword and back cover were also published in programmes accompanying reconstructions of the *Berlin* score in the 1980s, discussed below. In the foreword, Meisel stressed that music directors should focus on rhythm and colour rather than volume, avoiding lyrical *portamenti*. He also requested that theatre owners allow their music directors sufficient rehearsal time to achieve the synchronization of film and music in this modern work, and that those with smaller ensembles should accentuate the primitive aspect of the score by playing only the notes in large type, the clear thematic line, and foregoing the counterpoint. The back cover of the score contains a photograph of Meisel, a short statement from the composer and seven themes: *Arbeitsmarsch*, *Maschinenrhythmen*, *Verkehrsrhythmen*, *Mittagschoral der Großstadt*, *Sportrhythmus*, *Nachrhythmus* and *Berlin-Thema*. Some of these themes and the contents of pages 13 and 130 from the score are discussed below within their appropriate contexts.

For reconstructions of Meisel's scores to *Potemkin*, *Der heilige Berg* and *October*, it has generally proved necessary to re-work Meisel's material drastically to fit much longer prints, which often have scenes in a different order. With *Berlin* it is the opposite: Meisel's piano score contains slightly too much music (only a few minutes' duration) in relation to the various surviving film prints (Goergen 1987-04-26; Goslar 2007). There are also fewer differences between the surviving prints, since *Berlin* did not suffer the series of censorship cuts which befell *Potemkin*, chiefly because it was not a conventional feature-film and contained no contentious material. Meisel's *Berlin* score often requires a virtually bar-by-bar synchronization with Ruttmann's rapidly intercut images and is a considerable challenge for the conductor in live performance.

Numerous reconstructions of *Berlin* have been made, either for orchestra or for the reduced forces of two pianos and percussion. As with *Potemkin*, it was Kleiner who first reconstructed the piano score in 1975, using a copy received from Leyda (Merchant 1973). Kleiner scored his reconstruction for two pianos and percussion. The second piano part merely doubled the first, Kleiner having believed that this solution 'sounded more orchestral, not so thin as a single piano' (Heller 1984 [1977]: 42). He played both piano parts on the recording made for Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) in Hamburg, broadcast on 26 April 1975 (Prox 1979: 30). This was the only available reconstruction when Motte-Haber and Emons made their brief analysis of Meisel's score in 1980, discussed below. Doubts have been cast regarding the validity of Kleiner's reconstruction; a comparison of the NDR broadcast with Feld's score revealed that Kleiner had freely manipulated much of the original material and that the percussion part had been improvised on drums and cymbals (Dümling and Prox 1982-03-16: 12).

Günther Becker (Acts I–IV) and Emil Gerhardt (Act V) completed a further reconstruction for two pianos and percussion in 1982, performed in February at the

32nd Berlinale and in September at the Frankfurt Film Festival. Again, Prox was a driving force behind this reconstruction and described how

[Becker] arranged each note in the composer's adaptation and over several months' work created a new score. In accordance with the piano score, he designed and composed the dynamic, timbral and rhythmic values of his extensive percussion section (marimba, vibraphone, two timpani, bass drum, two small drums, glockenspiel, tam-tam, cymbals, anvil, triangle), in faithful accordance with the requirements of the musical structure.

(Dümling and Prox 1982-03-16: 12)

This reconstruction was reprised in Frankfurt during a special retrospective to commemorate Ruttmann's centenary in December 1987.

Also in 1987 and at the instigation of Prox, Mark Andreas was commissioned to make a reconstruction for large orchestra. This was performed by the RIAS-Jugendorchester and three brass bands in July 1987 as part of Berlin's 750th anniversary celebrations (Goergen 1987-04-26). Mark Andreas went on to arrange Meisel's piano score for sixteen players in 1990 and composed a completely new orchestral accompaniment for *Berlin* in 1995, entitled *Montage* (Schlingensiefen 2011).

Helmut Imig has also reconstructed Meisel's *Berlin* score for two pianos and percussion, as well as for large orchestra. These reconstructions are listed on his website under his substantial conducting repertoire of silent films with original or modern scores, together with occasional performances of *Berlin* from 2004 onwards (Imig 2011). The listed duration time, ninety minutes, seems too long and is much longer than the most recent reconstruction by Bernd Thewes, discussed below. It might seem bizarre that Imig found it necessary to make even more reconstructions, given the existence of the Becker/Gerhardt and Mark Andreas re-workings, but it was probably an economically expedient way to avoid issues concerning copyright and performing rights.

Bernd Thewes was commissioned to make a reconstruction for large orchestra and jazz-combo, to be performed at the Friedrichstadtpalast, Berlin, on 24 September 2007, eighty years after its original performance. This reconstruction accompanied a specially restored print, which was only marginally shorter than the original version from 1927. The press release described how Thewes chose a jazz-combo typical of the 1920s: cornet/trumpet, tenor saxophone, trombone, piano, bandoneón, banjo, double bass and drum-kit, which he used wherever possible as a counterpoint to the main orchestra, not just during the jazz-band scenes in the final act (Goslar 2007). Whilst Meisel clearly stated at the beginning of his piano score that the film should be projected at an average speed of 21 fps ('not less than 20, a maximum of 22'), a speed of 20 fps was used in performance to allow for easier execution of Thewes's densely textured orchestration (Goslar 2007), giving a runtime of just under sixty-five minutes. This new print restoration and score reconstruction have since been broadcast on ZDF/ARTE (30 December 2007). The following analysis is based on the subsequent DVD release, part of a 2-disc collection of surviving films directed by Ruttmann in the period 1921–31 (Ruttmann 2008).

Analysis

The footage in *Berlin* is organized chronologically to represent the progression of a typical weekday in the city, delineated by shots of clock faces:

The city is shown as an architectural amalgam, as a transport system, as a workspace; class variation and spatial separation within it are represented through playing fields, construction sites, restaurants and streets. Throughout the diversity of locations, activities and class, meaning is created through cluster editing, and coherence provided by the clock. (Uricchio 1982: 223)

Ruttmann's 'day' is divided into four sections: the early hours before 8 am (Act I) when the factory workers leave their homes; the period until midday, covering the office workers and shop assistants (Acts II and III); a restful lunch followed by the

resumption of work, leading to leisure time in the late afternoon (Act IV); and the revelries during Berlin's nightlife (Act V). Meisel's score opens in a similar fashion to *Potemkin*, with a brief rising fanfare culminating in a percussion tremolo beneath the opening credits (see Figure 7.1).

7.1 Overture (*Berlin*, PS 3)

The musical score for the Overture of *Berlin, PS 3* is presented in three systems. The first system shows the piano introduction with a diminished fifth in the opening harmony. The second system continues the piano introduction with a tremolo in the right hand. The third system shows the entry of the strings and woodwinds, including a section labeled 'Titel des Films' and 'Ende des Vorspiels'.

Again, the expected tonic and dominant alternation is distorted via the simple means of a diminished fifth in the opening harmony to generate excitement and tension. The film opens with shots of rippling water, turning into abstract animated horizontal bars interrupted by pivoting geometric shapes. Meisel replicates the undulating movement and the increasing speed of the pivoting shapes, then cuts to a train simulation as intersecting diagonal lines dissolve into the reality of railway signals to reveal a train speeding towards Berlin in the early hours of the morning. There are several

opportunities for train simulations in the film, a subject to which he would return in his sound-effects discs and score for *Der blaue Expresß* (see Chapters 8 and 13). Meisel's first train simulation hurtles along with motoric force, adding anvil clashes as it passes a factory, until it eventually slows down and stops at its destination. His chorale-like *Berlin-Thema* is announced by the brass, accompanying a panoramic view of the city's buildings (Figure 7.2). The instrumentalists were positioned around the auditorium for this theme 'in an experiment to attain the illusion of totality' (Meisel, reported in *Film-Kurier* 1927-06-11).

7.2 'Berlin' theme (*Berlin*, Act I: PS 12)

Shortly after, there is an extended sequence of images representing the sleeping city, which corresponds to page 13 of Meisel's score, reproduced in Figure 7.3. This page has numerous screen indicators: 1st street, 2nd street, 3rd street, a square, the gutter, the sewer, the Mosse Haus and Scherl Haus (offices for some of Berlin's newspapers), a boiler room and its machinery, a façade, telegraph masts (an electric transformer station), shutters, a shoemaker's premises, a corset shop with mannequins in the window, paper floating in the water, paper blowing on the street, a house with its shutters askew, a street with a nightwatchman, a cat, an advertising pillar, people returning home from a night on the town, pigeons, and a bill sticker. Each of these indicators represents one shot and is delineated in Meisel's score with either a sustained chord or a short motivic fragment:

Stasis and movement are meticulously notated, the latter through syncopated, wandering crotchets (the mannequin dolls in the window display), which come to a minim standstill, through a three-note motif in bar 160 [for the paper],

through the arpeggio (cat) darting away [bar 168], through quavers sauntering chromatically homewards (bar 171); similarly the differences in altitude: the music always follows the gaze of the camera ('sewers', 'telegraph mast', 'pigeons'). The vertical density, mostly produced through doubling, corresponds with the amount of objects shown at the time. In the end, the harmony emphasizes the editing: the greater unities of the combined shots in the film (first, second, third street; paper in the water/on the street) become separated again from each other through chromatic shifts.

(Motte-Haber and Emons 1980: 63)

7.3 The city still asleep at 5 am (*Berlin, Act I: PS 13*)

Adagio

Fl. Pesante

I. Strasse II. Strasse III. Strasse

p [130] [135]

ab hier breite Takte Platz Gosse Kanalisation Mosse Haus

molto rit. [140] *pp*

Scherl Haus Messelraum Maschienen Fassade Telegraphenmaste

nicht so breit als bisher [145] *mf* *p* *mf*

Jalousie Schuhkeller Korsettggeschäft Schaufenster Puppen wandern stehen

[155] *p*

Papier im Wasser Papier auf Strasse Haus mit schiefer Jalousie Strasse Nachtwächter Katze

Ob. Kl. Viol. Ob. Holz Str. *breit u. ausdrucksvoll* *p* *dimi- - nu - en - do* [160] [165] *p* *Arpeggio*

Litfaßsäule *sehr langsam* Heimkehrende Bummelr Tauben Zettelkleber

[170] *tranquillo* *pp dolce* [175] *rit.*

8th-----J

It is unclear why Meisel chose to suggest that the mannequins were moving: they are static in the latest restoration of the film print, although there are some rocking models in shop windows shown in Act II. Also, the representation for the pigeons in a high register (bar 174) seems out of place, given that the pigeons are at ground level in the shot.

The rest of Act I concentrates on the city waking up as Berlin's factory workers leave their homes and collectively 'march' to their respective places of employment. Meisel initially sets a brisk tempo to match the steps of the first man to leave his house, but, as the crowd increases, the tempo broadens out, accumulating in volume and strength. The march reaches its apogee as the crowd pass by a man playing a barrel-organ and cross over some bridges, to the theme Meisel labelled *Arbeitsmarsch* (Figure 7.4).

7.4 The march to work (*Berlin*, Act I: PS 20)

The musical score for 'The march to work' is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is in treble clef and contains block chords, while the bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo is 'Sehr langsam breit und wuchtig' and the dynamics are 'ff' (fortissimo) for 'Volles Orch.'. The score is divided into three sections: 'Leierkasten' (starting at bar 130), 'Brücke m. Arbeitern', and 'Arbeitsmarsch'. The bass line includes markings for 8va and 8vb.

One lever symbolically brings the factories into life, instigating layers of motoric, dissonant and percussive ostinati in Meisel's score (Figure 7.5). The composer characteristically turns the material into a rising sequence increasing in volume and tempo, overlaid with different percussive effects to replicate the various manufacturing processes, such as anvil clashes at an iron foundry. In terms of notation and aural effect, Meisel's machine music (and his train simulations) are similar to the factory soundscape in Mosolov's *Zavod (Iron Foundry)*, Op. 19 (c.1927), composed for an expanded symphony orchestra and a metal sheet to recreate the sound of clashing iron and steel in the finale (for first publication, see Mosolov 1929).

7.5 Machine rhythm (*Berlin*, Act I: PS 21)

Hebel-Druck, langsame Drehungen
Maschinen Musik
Hr.

Holz. Str.
ffz

Bass Pos.
ffz

Acts II and III have more opportunities for train simulations and bustling traffic, contrasted with lyrical vignettes as children go to school and aristocrats go for their morning horse-rides. There is greater continuity between motivic ideas in these acts and the ‘joins’ are not so obviously demarcated. Whilst Ruttmann has been criticized for his lack of social commentary, there is obvious delineation in Meisel’s score during Act IV between the rich and the poor at their different eating establishments, the most tonal music in a popular style being reserved for the former. This act also has several indications that the harmonium or celesta should be used to accompany various scenes involving small children gathered round an ice-cream cart (perhaps to suggest the tinkling of the bells on the cart) and playing outside. Although Meisel does latch on to certain visual details, overall these three central acts demonstrate a greater variety of styles, textures and musical development than is present in any of his other scores. This is perhaps a reflection of the extended period of composition afforded Meisel for this project. Thewes’s orchestral reconstruction also brings Meisel’s compositional skills into sharper relief, primarily because Thewes does not appear to overwhelm the score with multitudinous sound effects and hammering percussion to the extent implied in the contemporaneous reviews.

The final act is filled with expanses of diegetic music (original, not borrowed) for a variety show, dancing in various locales (the primary reason for the jazz-combo), and an accordion accompaniment for a man singing in a bar. All of these

have visual correlations: a pit orchestra accompanying the variety acts, jazz bands and dancing couples, and an accordionist. A page from the jazz-dancing is reproduced in Figure 7.6 and shows a marked increase in textural complexity compared with *Potemkin*. The increased level of detail in the additional stave is typical for this particular act and is perhaps evidence of Meisel's increasing experience in handling orchestration and composition. The complexity is achieved by the layering of several relatively simple patterns. Meisel eschews any attempt at a catchy melody and instead captures the energy and mechanical precision of the dancing – just anonymous dancing legs – through a constant rhythmic pulse.

7.6 Jazz-dancing (*Berlin*, Act V: PS 130)

The musical score for 'Jazz-dancing' from *Berlin*, Act V, pages 285-295, is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various instrumental parts: Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Violin (Viol.), Jazz-Orchester, Saxophon, Jazz-Band-Dirigent, Banjo, Viertonmusik, Trompete (Trp.), Horn (Hr.), Positiv (Pos.), Großaufnahme: Tanzende Beine, Tanzpaare, Großaufnahme: Tanzende Beine, Cello (Cello), Positiv (Pos.), Violin (Viol.), Oboe (Ob.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Reklame - Leucht-kugeln. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and a constant rhythmic pulse. The tempo changes from 'rit.' to 'a tempo' at the end of the page. The score is marked with measure numbers 285, 290, and 295.

Comparisons with the scores to *Entr'acte* and *Ballet mécanique*

Meisel's score for *Berlin* is constructed in blocks of material which change to new patterns and textures, abruptly and generally without transition, in line with Ruttmann's changing imagery. This is equally evident in the many changes during the quiet street scenes (Figure 7.3) and in the cut from scenes of dancing to the traffic and bustle of Berlin's streets at night (Figure 7.6, last two bars). This structural approach to film scoring can also be found in Antheil's *Ballet mécanique* score and Satie's accompaniment to *Entr'acte*, the latter divided into fifty-eight short musical units grouped into ten large sections (see analysis in Marks 1997: 167–85; 171). Julie Hubbert has suggested that this structural method was unconventional for silent-film scoring, devised by composers such as Antheil and Satie in response to the abstract imagery in their respective films, prompting them to 'think more abstractly about the function of music in film, . . . to emphasize the "time values" over "tonal values", rhythm over themes, repetition over melodic motifs' (Hubbert 2008: 131). Hubbert implies that the structural method of scoring is diametrically opposed to and mutually exclusive from the more illustrative purposes conventionally associated with film music. This places undue negativity on those composers using the latter method. Such a separation is also irrelevant to Meisel, who managed, simultaneously, to underpin the structure of the film and illustrate visual details. Moreover, Meisel had already formulated this approach in *Der heilige Berg* (and to a lesser extent *Potemkin*), before he encountered Ruttmann's abstract imagery.

Motte-Haber and Emons identified this duality in Meisel's score, but viewed his approach in an entirely negative light, making no allowance for the close collaboration between composer and director which sanctioned much of the score:

[Meisel's score emphasizes how] Ruttmann's non-narrative film (in the narrow sense) is divided into clear sequences. For almost every one of these sequences is accompanied in Meisel's music by a self-contained musical gesture; in each case a conspicuous tonal cadence is matched with the final frame of such a sequence. However within these sequences the sounds latch on to each visual

detail with naturalistic curiosity, entirely in the style of the bad practices of silent-film accompaniment, whose pleonastic nature perhaps only remained unnoticed here because Meisel's poor compositional technique was considered to be advanced; his music proclaimed to speak the idiom of its time.

Essentially, Meisel's composition depends on analogies with space and movement, on stereotypes developed during the course of music history and allusions with more or less clearly defined influences of quotation. . . . [C]ranes divide, lifting their loads to a rising chromatic scale, garage doors open themselves to a crescendo, . . . machines start in asymmetric rhythms, trains run in bustling motoric quavers, the working masses move in march rhythm. . . .

Because Meisel's music is slavishly fixated on every visual detail, it destroys its best aspects: expression and coherence. Its harmonic material, mainly chromatically shifted mixtures and added sixth chords, works randomly, its marches – stepping on the spot – without goal and direction. Its sole purpose lies in acoustic illustration. Since this is superfluous for artistic economy, what remains is the role of a talkative prompter. Its best places are perhaps those which are perceived less as music than as stylized noise.

(Motte-Haber and Emons 1980: 60–1, 63)

Again, their phrase 'analogies with space and movement' indicates how appropriate it is to discuss Meisel's compositional approach in terms of isomorphic and iconic uses of sound (Curtis 1992: 201–2).

Meisel's inclusion of a siren, tuned car horns and other sundry industrial objects in his orchestra invites further comparison with *Ballet mécanique*, the latter originally scored for three xylophones, electric bells, three airplane propellers, tamtam, drums, siren, two pianos, and sixteen pianolas divided into four parts (Antheil 2003). Both *Ballet mécanique* and *Berlin* use dissonance, jazz and a brutal rhythmic vitality to recreate the sounds of mechanized life during the industrial age, but Meisel's score cannot compete with the sheer density of Antheil's aural bombardement or his constantly shifting metres. Whereas Meisel has barely any metrical changes and his concept of rhythm is a continuous regular pulse, in the proto-minimalist sense of repetitive, hammering rhythms, Antheil incorporates more than 600 time-signature changes within a score of just over 1200 bars (Lehrman 2003: xiii). Antheil further blurs any sense of pulse via syncopations over the bar line

and irregular accentuations. Another fundamental difference lies in the relationship between the scores and their respective films. Unlike the close collaboration between Ruttmann and Meisel in the making of *Berlin*, the score and film for *Ballet mécanique* were made in complete isolation and had premieres in separate European cities. As a result, the two did not match even in length (the music was almost twice as long as the film) and were rarely performed in tandem and only then in heavily revised orchestrations for mainly standard pianos. It proved technically impossible to perform Antheil's original conception for multiple synchronized pianolas during his lifetime. This futuristic mechanized music has finally been realized in the digital age, using MIDI technology and digitally recorded sound effects (Lehrman 2003: xiii–iv; reconstruction on DVD available in Frank and Lehrman 2006). Any points of audio-visual symbiosis detected in this modern reconstruction should therefore be regarded as 'accidental synchronism' (Cocteau 1954: 72). By comparison, Meisel's recreation of the 'here and now' of 1927 Berlin fitted Ruttmann's film exactly and his score was performed at several screenings per day during its extended run at the Tauentzien-Palast.

***Berlin* beyond Berlin**

Meisel's *Berlin* score was not heard throughout Germany or abroad to the same extent as *Potemkin* had been. There is a report of Meisel's music being played in Hamburg within a month of the Berlin premiere (Br. 1927-10-24), but the wider dissemination and impact of the score has yet to be researched and assessed.

There were at least two seminal performances of *Berlin* abroad, the first at the Film Society in London on 4 March 1928 and the second in Paris just over two months later. Sudendorf (1984: 23) assumed that Meisel conducted his score at both of these foreign presentations, but Meisel was in Moscow around the time of the Film Society performance (*Film-Kurier* 1928-03-03), where his music was conducted by Ernest

Grimshaw (The Film Society 1972: 85–8). The reviewer in *The Times* was relieved to live in London, rather than Berlin:

[The film creates] an impression of the fret and weariness and hurrying futility of a modern city which could scarcely be so well conveyed by any other means. Mr. Meisel's music . . . is as restless and as cruelly ironical as the picture itself. . . . [T]he mechanical monotony of urban existence becomes, with the music, an intolerable rhythm. To come out into the sunshine and to remember that still there is somewhere a country where men do not move in droves and have not yet become part of their machines, is to experience a profound relief.

(*The Times* 1928-03-05)

Meisel did conduct his score in Paris and wrote to Eisenstein about the enthusiastic reception and press reviews on his return (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 6 June 1928; *La Cinématographie Française* 1928-05-19).

Berlin and Meisel's original accompaniment were successfully revived at the Tauentzien-Palast in July 1928 (*Film-Kurier* 1928-07-18). Once again, Meisel had his detractors: 'Dissonances, dissonances and even more dissonances. The friend of music turns in horror' (–D– 1928-07). During that same month, Meisel conducted his *Berlin* score at a special film festival in Munich. The festival aimed to promote some of the best films from Europe and America, with a particular emphasis on high quality orchestral accompaniment, provided by a salon orchestra of around nineteen players. The festival included a few films with specially composed scores, but the majority had existing illustrations devised by leading practitioners in Germany (such as Becce, Heymann and Schmidt-Gentner), some of whom were also guest conductors (Martini 1928-08; h.s. 1928-07-21). Rapée's earlier work in Berlin was also represented (including *Variété*). Meisel had been expecting to conduct his *Potemkin* score at the festival. Unwittingly, Prometheus had leased *Potemkin* to a communist organization in Munich around the same time; these performances generated renewed political unrest over the film, resulting in its withdrawal from the programme (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 25 July 1928).

8 *October: ‘A thousand bars that shook the eardrum’*

Eisenstein's *Oktyabr* was one of several films commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October 1917 Revolution. It covers various episodes in Petrograd between February and October 1917, from the abdication of the Tsar and formation of a Provisional Government until the Bolsheviks assumed sole power. Eisenstein's main source of inspiration was the 1920 re-enactment, *The Storming of the Winter Palace*, by the director Yevreinov, which had a cast of 10,000 and an audience of 30,000 situated in the square before the Winter Palace (Bordwell 2005: 82). Such mass spectacles helped to forge an exaggerated, stylized view of historical events. The Bolshevik coup in October 1917 had been a relatively bloodless affair, with only a small number of men storming the Winter Palace. This act achieved epic proportions in Eisenstein's hands, the small detachment of invaders 'becom[ing] for all time – a crowd of thousands' pouring over the main gate (Bordwell 2005: 80).

Pfeiffer informed Eisenstein that Prometheus planned to release his forthcoming film in Berlin on a large scale, again with a score by Meisel and hopefully this time with Eisenstein in attendance (Pfeiffer to Eisenstein, Berlin, 14 October 1927). Pfeiffer also passed on a request from Meisel, namely that the composer wanted to perform his *Potemkin* music in Moscow. Meisel had first made this request over a year before (Prometheus to Eisenstein, Berlin, 17 July 1926), but now his wish was finally granted and he wrote with great enthusiasm to Eisenstein:

I have been invited to the anniversary festivities and I will come to Moscow immediately after my next Berlin premiere,¹ thus between 11 and 12 November, in order to conduct my music at the *Potemkin* performance and to become acquainted with *10 Days that shook the world*.

(Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 6 November 1927)

¹ Piscator's production of *Rasputin* on 10 November 1927. See Table 3.1.

In subsequent letters, Meisel often referred to the film as *Oktober*, which is rendered in English, below, without further comment. From the outset, Prometheus referred to Eisenstein's film under the more dramatic title of *Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten*. The title *Zehn Tage* is used exclusively in the following discussion when specifying the German release of Eisenstein's film.

Meisel in Moscow

The anniversary festivities did not go according to plan for either the composer or the director. Meisel's ambition to perform his *Potemkin* score in Moscow was thwarted, a failure he described in an unpublished letter to the Moscow press, written in the wake of his second visit to Moscow (discussed below):

I came to Moscow by invitation with the *Potemkin* materials, but the management of Sovkino did not want to risk advertising and rehearsals for this performance, which did not appear to them to be sufficiently important, in spite of the fact that its extraordinary success had already been proven. (Meisel 1928-03)

Worse still, Eisenstein had made himself dangerously ill with exhaustion, heart-strain and an abuse of stimulants in an unsuccessful attempt to edit *October* in time for the 7 November deadline (Bulgakowa 2001: 75). It had only been possible to show fragments at the anniversary, and then in the Bolshoi's experimental theatre studio rather than the main auditorium (Taylor 2002: 82, n. 29). Eisenstein had to stop working for several weeks and resumed editing in December. Meisel spent around three weeks in Moscow (*Film-Kurier* 1927-12-17), during which Eisenstein was at times confined to bed rest in order to recover from his over-exhaustion. Feld maintained that Meisel did not meet Eisenstein because of his ill-health (Christie 1988), but the director was not totally incapacitated. From Meisel's press reports regarding this trip and three surviving letters from Meisel to Eisenstein, written in December 1927 and January 1928, we can safely assume that Meisel did converse directly with Eisenstein, if only for short periods.

The three letters concern Meisel's further preparations for the German release of *October*, Prometheus's intention to have the Berlin premiere before that in Moscow (with Meisel conducting his music at both) and problems with Prometheus over adequate remuneration for Meisel and Eisenstein. The letters also mention some written plans and music sketches, which Meisel sent to Eisenstein for further development. One of these documents may have been a sound plan which Meisel had first formulated in Moscow with Eisenstein's help (Meisel 1928-02-25). A copy of this sound plan has survived in Eisenstein's papers, entitled 'Abgekürzte Musikdisposition zum OKTOBER-Film' (reproduced in Bulgakowa 1998: 88–9). This plan is typed in German and contains two pages of short scene descriptors divided into eight sections by handwritten roman numerals. There are also other handwritten annotations in German, possibly in Eisenstein's handwriting. Because he lacked a completed film print (or any footage) during most of his preparatory work on the score, Meisel had to rely on Eisenstein for the timings he would normally have made himself. Accordingly, Meisel sent Eisenstein some music sketches for approval and asked Eisenstein to add details of duration and rhythmic specifications (Els and Edmund Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 30 December 1927). These sketches were presumably a thematic 'fleshing out' of the sound plan typed out during Meisel's first visit to Moscow, but the sketches are not considered to be extant.

On 14 January 1928, *Film-Kurier* contained a Prometheus advertisement announcing the forthcoming world premiere of Eisenstein's film in Berlin the following month (reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 80). Despite this advertising hype, Eisenstein had only just finished the film – it was shown to the government on 23 January (Taylor 2002: 16) – and Meisel was still labouring away without having access to the completed film print (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 29 January 1928). On 3 March, Meisel set off for Moscow for a second time, having been invited by Eisenstein to conduct his score at the Moscow premiere (*Film-Kurier* 1928-03-03). Once again Meisel's music was not heard: Eisenstein's anniversary film was given a

general release in Moscow on 14 March without the planned gala performance in the Bolshoi Theatre taking place (Taylor 2002: 16–17; *Film-Kurier* 1928-03-24).

Meisel's unpublished letter to the Moscow press reveals how his plans went awry. On returning to Moscow, he discovered that the film was now radically different from the version he had seen in November 1927. This and the smaller orchestral forces put at his disposal forced Meisel to rearrange his score, for which labour Sovkino verbally offered him some additional payment. Meisel worked frenetically to meet the deadline until Sovkino suddenly decided that the whole venture was too expensive and drew a halt to the proceedings, without honouring any of the verbal agreements (Meisel 1928-03).

Premiere and reception

A despondent Meisel returned to Berlin in order to prepare his score for the imminent German premiere. Münzenberg had asked Eisenstein to prepare the German release in Berlin and had promised to cover Eisenstein's expenses (Münzenberg to Eisenstein, Berlin, 3 February 1928), but this agreement was never fulfilled. The task of editing the film for the German market fell once more to Jutzi (*Reichsfilmblatt* 1928-04-07). Prometheus submitted Eisenstein's film to the censors under their chosen title, *Zehn Tage*, and the film was approved on 29 March 1928. In his diary, Eisenstein recorded the contents of a telegram received from Els Meisel, dated 2 April 1928, which stated that his film had passed the Berlin censors without requiring further cuts. Nonetheless, the German release, at 2210 metres in length, was about a fifth shorter than the Moscow premiere version (Sudendorf 1984: 96). Meisel's frantic efforts to prepare his score in time for the premiere were further hampered by insufficient access to the finished German edit (Feld, in conversation with Alan Fearon in *The Meisel Mystery* 1989). Eventually the film had its Berlin premiere on 2

April 1928 in the Tauentzien-Palast, with the orchestra expanded to seventy players (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1928-04-02).

Berlin had expected their emotions to be aroused by another *Potemkin*, but instead saw an overly long film (around 88 minutes at 22 fps) aimed at their intellect through Eisenstein's symbolism. The Berlin critics almost universally panned the film. Many preferred Pudovkin's *The End of St Petersburg* – a more poetic treatment of the same historical events – which had already been seen in Berlin (premiere reviewed in Steinicke 1928-02-28; reproduced in Kühn *et al.* 1975a: 382–6). Others were simply put off by another film on the same topic. Meisel sent Eisenstein a selection of press clippings, which were mostly critical of the film and Meisel's score (Edmund and Els Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 5 April 1928). Amongst these clippings was a damning critique from Hildebrandt in *Berliner Tageblatt*, who complained about the monotonous succession of marches, protests, speeches, rifles and bayonets. In conclusion he said that

The audience left the Tauentzien-Palast in silence. That was, considering the enormous expectation prior to the event, a crushing verdict. (Hi. 1928-04-03)

Meisel described Hildebrandt's denunciation of the film as 'the worst blow', since the newspaper was widely read and highly influential on public opinion. Meisel berated Hildebrandt for making false claims: 'What Herr Hildebrandt writes in the *Berliner Tageblatt* is the greatest nastiness and clearly fabricated!', stating instead that the enthusiastic applause ultimately overcame the naysayers (Edmund and Els Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 5 April 1928). Other reviews also describe the applause at the end of the screening (see, for example Betz 1928-04-07; Maraun 1928-04-03), casting further doubt on Hildebrandt's claim.

As with Meisel's *Berlin* score, the overall impression left on many critics was one of relentlessly loud and dissonant hammering by brass and percussion:

[The film] lacks large-scale sweeping movement, for which Edmund Meisel's original-(racket)-music cannot compensate, but can only induce physical

discomfort. Nevertheless a remarkable and interesting film which every film fan should see. (Reichsfilmblatt 1928-04-07)

Meisel's monotonous music dulls the nerves. (Ihering 1928-04-03; reproduced in Ihering 1959: 550-2; 502)

Eisenstein's film unwinds to Meiselian noise-music. . . . Strong applause at the end. This was directed at Eisenstein, not at the dissonance-obsessed miaow-Meisel. (Betz 1928-04-07)

The roaring symphony of *10 Days* does not need Meisel's hammering for support. The pained ear longs in vain for a moment's rest, to grant undisturbed sensory perception to the eye. It appears to us that the 'still' images of the film are the loudest drowned out by far. The loudest music is not always the best. (Rubiner 1928-04-28; reproduced in Kühn *et al.* 1975a: 387-9; 389)

The consolidated droning of the orchestra, working almost constantly in a solidly united tutti, passes over the filmic detail for the most part: one cannot pick flowers with mittens. Intensification is already no longer possible. It cannot fail to be apparent that the listener without adequate durability quickly becomes weary; the capacity of the ear to absorb is exhausted, which hinders rather than supports the eye.

A thousand bars that shook the eardrum. Reminiscent of an extremely unpleasant bodily sensation. That, however, . . . is neither the purpose of film music nor of music in general. (Wallner 1928-05-05)

The film [was accompanied by] the hideous music-sound-effects of Meisel . . . (Kracauer 1928-06-05; reproduced in Müllder-Bach 2004: 85-8; 87)

The Eisenstein film . . . is currently running at the Breslau Deli-Theater.

At yesterday's performance of this film there was violent public protest regarding Meisel's composed music.

The customers disrupted the performance through intense foot-stamping, clapping as well as heckling 'Off with the music!' etc.

Actually the film was very popular and generally appealing.

(*Film-Kurier* 1928-07-25)

Worst of all, Meisel became the focus of a damning and extensive personal attack on his musicianship by one of his Berlin colleagues. Pringsheim published a lengthy

invective entitled 'Music or Meisel?' in the April edition of *Film-Ton-Kunst*, calling Meisel a shallow, self-promoting *Unmusiker*, who was constantly boasting in the press about every 'new' musical and technological advance he made. Here is a taste of Pringsheim's thoughts on Meisel's latest score:

This music is a catastrophe. . . .

The first impression, and it is maintained until the last note: why, for God's sake these inane unbearable noises? But worse: it is plainly inane rubbish which endorses itself allegedly as music. No trace of structural logic, no inkling of harmonic logic. This composer, who for too long has been considered to be one, is incapable of developing a few bars coherently. He writes for a large orchestra, preferably the whole lot all at once, but his orchestra sounds atrocious. Even here, in the instrumentation, overblown incompetence; the rudiments of things easily learned are not yet mastered. Then the most astonishing thing: the unfailing reserve of impotence, out of which these one and a half hours of sonorous worthlessness are supplied. . . .

There are, from 'Atonality' to 'New Objectivity', no misconstrued buzzwords of the last years which the un-musician Meisel has not had in readiness for his defence. 'Atonal'? Now, sure enough, every bar is teeming with wrong notes, at every desk wrong notes are played; whether they all exist in the parts, perhaps even in the score, how many are intended, how many are unintended, unintended by whom, intended by whom: that remains of no concern, and it is – by any stretch of the imagination – indistinguishable in the commotion of madness without technique. The maddest thing is certainly that the affair pretends to be – well yes, modern music. To be modern, that is Meisel's dream and, where he strikes it lucky, his weapon. Quarter-tone music? Nothing simpler; he puts a quarter-tone piano in the orchestra (*Berlin*). Get rid of middle-class romanticism? But of course, why ever not? The mentality of the young generation? Give it to me! Mechanization? This was always his desire . . . There was no advancement of which he did not brag, no new acquisition – on the subject of which, what about the ether waves? – after which he did not grasp, in order to dress it up as a great feat of his genius in the manner of a boastful pamphlet. The poorest thing, he does not comprehend how profoundly below par he remains with his bungling . . . If he, the fool, only knew, how his 'modernity' is regarded in the sphere of these modernists . . . in the circles of the Schoenbergs, Hindemith, Kurt Weill – we others, we know it, without even having asked one of them . . .

Edmund Meisel has become a danger to film – not only this one – and a pest to film music: an enemy of our cause, if he is taken seriously for any longer. (Pringsheim 1928-04; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 68–9)

Pringsheim published his opinions in a journal specifically aimed at those interested in and involved in the creation of artistically worthy film music. He also had copies specially printed, which he sent to ‘interested parties’ in theatre and film (E. v. B. 1928-10-25). As a result of this humiliation and the potential damage to Meisel’s reputation and career prospects, there were further heated exchanges between the two men in the press and Meisel sued Pringsheim for damages of 10,000 Reichsmarks, claiming that Pringsheim had demonstrated ulterior motives of professional jealousy in sending his article to Meisel’s potential employers. Pringsheim countered this with a private action against Meisel, claiming defamation of character. Sudendorf has documented the press reports concerning this very public professional spat, which dragged on for several years (Sudendorf 1984: 25–6). Meisel’s claim was eventually thrown out of court in March 1929 and the two composers reached an amicable settlement over Pringsheim’s private action in September 1930. Meisel also came under attack from Strobel, writing in *Melos*:

[The film industry] regard the illustration practice as established dogma. Modern music and film production are out of touch with each other. Only the film industry looks upon Edmund Meisel . . . as a creative modern composer.

(Strobel 1928-07: 346)

The composer was fully aware of his status as an ‘outsider’ before Strobel pronounced his verdict, as is evident from an earlier comment made by Feld regarding Meisel’s *October* score:

[Meisel] shows once again that from his (out)side, from his still insufficiently appreciated utility music (*Gebrauchsmusik*), the problem of film music has been answered very well.

(Feld 1928-04-03)

Pringsheim (1928-04) implied that some of the cacophony at the Berlin premiere was due to mistakes in the parts and the playing of the parts. This suggests that the premiere must have been an extremely fraught occasion for Meisel at the rostrum, battling to synchronize his huge orchestra. Meisel did have some support from the press:

Meisel's strong sense of rhythm complements Eisenstein's rhythmic expressiveness. (Mühsam 1928-04-03)

And to the fantastic witches' Sabbath Edmund Meisel created an equally fantastic and completely unmelodious, but nerve-inflaming accompaniment which, played by a 70-strong orchestra, produced a stirring effect. (Olimsky 1928-04-03)

Edmund Meisel . . . has made considerable progress since Ruttmann's *Berlin* film in his bid for a purely rhythmical accompaniment of the images. He clings more closely to the flow of scenes, commands a richer variation of instrumentation, constantly arranging things anew and thus obtains the possibility of ever new intensification. A considerable achievement. (Maraun 1928-04-03)

The owner of the Tauentzien-Palast was prepared to continue screening *Zehn Tage* for some weeks during the summer of 1928, at a time when cinema attendance was usually low before the new season began in September, and increased his publicity campaign to counter the negative press reviews (Edmund and Els Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 5 April 1928). Prometheus artificially maintained the run of *Zehn Tage*, presumably in the vain hope that, given time, positive reports from those who had enjoyed Eisenstein's new film would turn the tide of public opinion (Feld, interviewed in *The Meisel Mystery* 1989). The Prometheus advertisement declaring 'The success of the season: *Ten Days that shook the World* running 4 weeks in the Tauentzien-Palast in spite of summer weather and will subsequently be playing initially in 120 Berlin theatres' (*Film-Kurier* 1928-04-30), should therefore be regarded with considerable caution. It is unlikely that the film was rolled out to so many cinemas, even in Berlin, and there would have been insufficient prints for the

film to be running at so many cinemas simultaneously. There are no distribution statistics available for *Zehn Tage*, but the film was screened in some cinemas beyond Berlin, including the Deli-Theater in Breslau (*Film-Kurier* 1928-07-25) and the Gloria-Palast in Frankfurt (Kracauer 1928-06-05). The myth that the *Potemkin* score was banned in some German towns, which had allowed the film to be screened, transmuted over time to include Meisel's *October* score (Hunter 1932: 53, fn. †; Manvell and Huntley 1957: 23). Since neither the film nor score achieved the fame and notoriety of *Potemkin*, and in the absence of substantiating documentary evidence, such claims can be ignored.

As in the case of his score to *Überflüssige Menschen*, Prometheus caused Meisel much grief over preparations of his *October* music for hire purposes:

By the way things with Prometheus are even worse. They have no money at all, but are probably now joining forces with Meschrabpom-Russ. Then perhaps things will improve again. They have behaved irresponsibly regarding the printing of the *October* music. At first they wouldn't allow anything to be printed. Then suddenly they issued the contract and we sat day and night preparing the printing, and shortly before everything was ready they cancelled it again. After lengthy negotiations they at least allowed what was already typeset to be printed off. So now parts exist for the smallest arrangement and one has incessantly to send on handwritten parts to the larger theatres (which constantly demand them). By the way, you will receive a copy of these fragments in the next few days. For the present we only have one for ourselves.

(Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 6 June 1928)

Extant sources and reconstructions

The 'fragments' Meisel sent to Eisenstein survive as an incomplete set of orchestral parts in Eisenstein's papers. There is also an extant piano score held by RGALI (Meisel 1928): the opening page is reproduced in Baier (1995: 20). In addition, the BFI hold an incomplete set of orchestral parts, some printed and some professionally copied, which may have been those imported for the Film Society performance in 1934 (see below) and subsequently left in the custody of Sidney Bernstein (Els

Meisel to Ivor Montagu, London, 4 November 1939, IM116a). The BFI holdings contain comprehensive parts for strings, an almost complete complement for brass, hardly any woodwind parts (only oboes), and percussion parts. There are single printed parts for Violin I, Violin II, Cello, Double Bass, Trumpet I, and a Percussion short-score, with the rest either duplicated by hand or solely in manuscript.

Manuscript copies of the overture have been written out for most instruments.

Several different hands were involved in preparing the manuscripts, some showing more haste than others. There are handwritten comments in ink by some of the contemporaneous viola-players, which indicate that their parts definitely stem from the run at the Tauentzien-Palast. For example, the general condemnation of the score was echoed in a comment on the second viola part (end of Act II):

Should a later generation sometime have the audacity to perform this film [score], let them know: harmoniousness no longer has anything to do with music, even if you play the film, as I have, 75 times!

Berlin, 23 April 1927 [*sic*]

Hans Hesse

Solo violist

Tauentzien-Palast

Berlin

The Film Society performance

Montagu had hoped to screen both *Potemkin* and *October* at the Film Society during Eisenstein's trip to London in the autumn of 1929, with Meisel conducting his scores (the composer was then residing in London: see Chapter 10). This proved impossible, due to the poor state of the *October* print which Montagu received.

October was eventually screened by the Film Society on 11 March 1934 (without any other films in the programme), using a much longer print than that imported by Montagu from Germany in 1929:

The present copy, far too long for ordinary commercial exploitation (9774 ft. with over 300 titles), is taken from the Russian negative. . . . The German-cut

version . . . has often been criticized for its incoherence and episodic nature. A study of this full copy shows that it not only reduced certain sequences and omitted others entirely . . . but it misplaced some into quite a different context. The music of Meisel, [originally] fitted to the shorter German version, has been expanded and adjusted by Mr. Ernest Irving . . . (The Film Society 1972: 285)

The version screened at the Film Society appears to have been slightly longer than that screened at the Moscow premiere in March 1928 and over a third longer than the German release in April 1928. The print used in London was constructed in seven acts, whereas Meisel's score was originally divided into six to match the German release. This did not bode well for the performance. Some of Irving's adjustments are still evident in pencilled annotations to the BFI parts (Kershaw 1984: 44), but the documentary evidence suggests that many parts were also specially copied out. These have not survived. The preparation of music and performance of *October* proved to be a hair-raising and costly event:

We imported Edmund Meisel's score, written for the German version . . . which demanded an orchestra of fifty players. Ernest Irving . . . had copyists working for weeks copying the parts. The musicians [from Ealing studios] . . . [were booked] for two full rehearsals. Then we found that the German version was 45 minutes shorter than the original, and the order of sequences had been changed. On Saturday morning at the Tivoli we were able to fit and rehearse only the first forty minutes of our full version of the film. Irving appointed two sub-conductors to his left and right to signal cues to the orchestra and to keep a record of the order in which they were playing from the score.

On Sunday morning they managed to fit music to the first part of the film (before the interval), amounting to some ninety minutes. During the lunch break the committee ate sandwiches and worked out a tentative continuity of passages from the score as far as we could remember the last hour of the film. . . .

[A] recording of Ernest's improvisation of that last hour of the film . . . would astound musicians to-day. Ernest kept up a shouting commentary, beating time and turning the pages of his score back and forth . . . [T]he orchestra never faltered, though some of them were too busy turning pages to play many notes. . . .

Ernest introduced the last chord of the score so early that he had to make the orchestra repeat it slowly eleven times before the end title came up on the

screen . . . The audience stood up and cheered as if it was the last night of the Proms. . . . This was the greatest display of collective musicianship I could ever hope to experience. (Dickinson 1975)

Ernest performed miracles, but as the picture approached its finish the end of the score was racing the end title and it was a problem of which would reach the winning post first. By marvels of extempore repetition or compression Ernest made both arrive within a few bars of each other, and the house was ecstatic. (Montagu 1975: 224 and 247)

Th[e] extra cheque for Mr. Irving [for £50] is in payment of the extra rehearsal . . . together with the payment of the copyists which could not be estimated until the work was completed. I understand that 3 men were up all night on Friday and Saturday doing this copying . . . (J. M. Harvey to Sidney Bernstein, London, 13 March 1934; FS13a)

The orchestral costs for *October* were estimated at just under £220 (FS24c), but this figure was reduced to around £127 in the official annual account (FS24b). *October* was probably one of the most expensive programmes with orchestral accompaniment ever presented by the Film Society. Whilst the lacklustre review in *The Times* (1934-03-12) failed to mention the presence of the orchestra at all, Rotha's review was perhaps the most honest:

It was unfortunate, although courageous, to allow Meisel's musical score to accompany the film, for it nearly ruined the thirteen reels with its four-square repetition and once broke down altogether. (P. R. 1934: 32)

Restoring the film: Alexandrov

In contrast with the numerous attempts to restore and establish an *Urtext* of *Potemkin*, Eisenstein's *October* has been virtually neglected. Alexandrov made the first significant restoration in 1967 for the fiftieth anniversary of the October revolution. He based his restoration on Soviet materials, supplemented by a more complete 16mm print held by the BFI (Christie 1993: 5). The images were stretched via step-printing to enable projection at sound-film speed (24 fps) and a soundtrack was

added, containing music, extensive sound effects and a speaking chorus to provide atmospheric effects in the mass scenes. This soundtrack is similar in many ways to Meisel's post-synchronization of *Potemkin* in 1930 (see Chapter 12). A new score was compiled from recordings of orchestral works by Shostakovich: it is not a pastiche as Taylor (2002: 7) stated. Shostakovich was not personally involved in making the compilation, but the compilers made mostly obvious choices from the two symphonies ostensibly commemorating the history of the Soviet revolution, namely No. 11 in G minor, Op. 103 ('The Year 1905') and No. 12 in D minor, Op. 112 ('The Year 1917: To the Memory of Lenin'), composed in 1957 and 1961 respectively. Most of their choices are apposite to the prevailing moods. For example, the rapid string fugue in the second movement of Symphony No. 11, nominally associated with the government troops who massacred many of the demonstrators at the Winter Palace in January 1905, is matched with the similar 'July Days' incident at Nevsky Prospekt in 1917. The same passage was re-used for the massacre on the Odessa Steps in the later reconstruction of *Battleship Potemkin* in 1976. As Cooke (2008: 100) noted, busy fugal textures have often been employed in sound-film scores for scenes of relentless pursuit or conflict. Similarities between some of the Shostakovich selections and Meisel's score are discussed below. Alexandrov's restoration became the international release version, usually screened as a sound film with Shostakovich's score, but also available as a silent film with either the Shostakovich compilation or an alternative score performed live. Variants of this 1967 restoration are commercially available on VHS and DVD, for example the DVD release by Eureka (2000; catalogue number EKA 40016) entitled *October 1917: Ten Days That Shook The World*.

There is currently a project underway to restore *October* with a new reconstruction of Meisel's score for the ZDF/ARTE channel, to be shown at the 2012 Berlinale. The new film print will have enhanced photographic quality and is being constructed chiefly from materials in the Filmmuseum München and the Russian

Film Archive (Gosfilmofond), for which Thewes will create a new orchestration of Meisel's piano score. The new film print will be about twenty minutes longer than the German release, requiring Meisel's music to be extended. Since two prints of the German release from 1928 survive in Amsterdam and at the BFI, the latter titled *Ten Days that Shook the World*, Thewes is in the enviable position of having at his disposal an exact filmic reference for the piano score, from which he can reconstruct the intended audio-visual relationships. If this BFI print had been made available for the two reconstructions of Meisel's score discussed below, the task would have been made considerably easier.

Reconstructing the score: Kershaw and Fearon

Prior to the forthcoming reconstruction by Thewes, there were two significant attempts at reconstructing Meisel's score, both made in Britain. The first was by Kershaw, assisted by students from the Music Department of York University, and performed twice by the University Orchestra in November 1979. Kershaw documented the genesis of his reconstruction in the programme accompanying the York performances (Kershaw 1979b) and in an article included in Sudendorf's monograph (Kershaw 1984). When Kershaw began his reconstruction, the only materials available to him were copies of the orchestral parts held at the BFI and a second microfilm obtained from Kleiner (via Leyda), containing virtually identical material held in Eisenstein's papers in Moscow. Kershaw found the surviving parts incomplete and riddled with inaccuracies; moreover, the bar numbers in the printed parts did not always tally with those in the handwritten parts (Roger Payne in *The Meisel Mystery* 1989).

Kershaw did not realize that the extant materials, though inadequate, reflected the poor state of the parts available for hire from Prometheus in the summer of 1928 (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 6 June 1928). Late on in the process of his reconstruction, a printed copy of the piano score (with some orchestration

indications) and miscellaneous orchestral parts were discovered to be in the possession of an East German musicologist, Georg Knepler. Again, Knepler had received his materials via Leyda and the score certainly came via a Russian archive: a stamp containing the Russian word for ‘museum’ is partly visible on the bottom right-hand corner of page 17. Copies of Knepler’s material arrived too late to be fully incorporated into the reconstruction and Kershaw conducted his performances from an annotated violin part (Kershaw 1984: 44).

According to Kershaw’s survey of the surviving material, Meisel’s orchestra originally consisted of double woodwind, two or more horns, four trumpets, three trombones, two harps and banjo, in addition to a large string orchestra and percussion section (timpani, bass drum, triangle, glockenspiel, side drum, celesta, xylophone, cymbalom, bells, siren, tambourine, gong, football rattle, and *Geräuschorgel* or ‘noise-organ’). The exact nature of Meisel’s ‘noise-organ’ is discussed below. The percussion short-score (BFI) requires at least seven percussionists at any one time. Kershaw’s reconstruction had five percussionists, supplemented by two tape-machines with pre-recorded effects to replicate the siren and Meisel’s *Geräuschorgel* (Kershaw 1979a: 5). This was a bold move towards authenticity. Kershaw also incorporated tape-recorded gunshots and crowd noises, making the reconstruction more akin to Meisel’s post-synchronization of *Potemkin* in 1930 (see Chapter 12). Using Alexandrov’s restored print, Kershaw was able to tailor most of Meisel’s score to fit; Acts III and V proved the most troublesome, due to the numerous transpositions of film sequences compared with the order indicated in Meisel’s piano score and parts. The major differences Kershaw encountered between the German release (as reflected in Meisel’s score) and the Alexandrov print are further evidence that Meisel prepared radically different scores and parts for the (cancelled) Moscow and Berlin premieres.

The BFI commissioned Alan Fearon to make a second reconstruction of Meisel’s score in 1988, to accompany a print of *October* assembled from one held by

the BFI and another in Moscow (Christie 1988). Despite having barely more than a month's preparation time, Fearon was able to build on the York performances and incorporate information from Meisel's piano score to achieve a greater degree of synchronization. Meisel's solution to large-scale synchronization – in accordance with standard practice – was generally to repeat single bars or short phrases *ad libitum* at the end of a section until the desired intertitle or change of scene appeared. It is also typical in Meisel's score for a section to conclude on a tremolo chord with a fermata, sometimes with a percussion break indicated, as for example during the change of scene from the active proletarian troops to the inactive Provisional Government (Act V, between pages 88 and 89 of the piano score). Following Meisel's lead, and as a professional percussionist himself, Fearon devised various percussion-only sections to cover the anomalies between score and film print. For example, there is one for Kornilov's advancing tanks in Act III, and several in Act V. Nevertheless, Act V still proved the most troublesome to synchronize. The latter is evident from the amount of 'cutting and pasting', repeat marks and general re-ordering of material in Fearon's adapted piano score, from which he conducted his performances.

Fearon's reconstruction was first performed by the Northern Sinfonia at Newcastle City Hall on 7 November 1988, the 71st anniversary of the Russian Revolution. There were subsequent performances that month in Cambridge and at the London Film Festival, and elsewhere in Europe the following year (see Appendix D). The genesis of Fearon's reconstruction, the frantic preparation of orchestral parts, and footage from two rehearsals and the first performance were documented in a Tyne Tees television programme, *The Meisel Mystery*. This documentary, narrated by David Puttnam with contributions from Fearon, Christie, Kershaw, Feld and Roger Payne (the music copyist), was broadcast in March 1989. Tyne Tees TV also made a studio recording of Fearon's reconstruction, which was eventually broadcast by UK's Channel 4 on 21 December 1992 (see Appendix D).

Analysis

Meisel considered the early involvement of the composer in the film process as the only true way of writing film music, particularly since his collaboration with Ruttmann over *Berlin* (Meisel 1927-04-01). His work on *October* also involved a close collaboration between composer and director, albeit one achieved mostly by correspondence. The following analysis has a specific purpose: to assess Eisenstein's influence on Meisel's score and question to what extent Eisenstein might be considered a co-composer. Certain sections of the piano score are examined in relation to comments in the surviving correspondence from Meisel to Eisenstein and Eisenstein's own documented descriptions of scenes from *October*. Due to their similarities with Meisel's musical ideas, these descriptions provide tantalizing clues to how the director might have described the film to Meisel during the latter's visits to Moscow or in subsequent (non-extant) correspondence. These descriptions are used as surrogates for more formal documentary evidence.

The analysis includes some points of comparison with the reconstructions by Kershaw and Fearon. In the section on musical caricatures, comparisons are also made with the Shostakovich compilation made for the Alexandrov print in 1967. Although it is highly unlikely that the Soviet compilers bothered to consult Meisel's materials in Eisenstein's papers (assuming these sources were known to be extant at that time), there are parallels to be drawn. Their selections were presumably influenced by Alexandrov's memories of Eisenstein's original intentions from the 1920s, further supplementing Eisenstein's documented comments. Finally, there are comparisons to be made with Shostakovich's first film score, for the silent film *New Babylon* (1929). Both *New Babylon* and *October* are episodic in structure and require an intimate knowledge of their relevant historical periods (the Paris Commune of 1871 in the case of *New Babylon*) to better appreciate the directors' intentions and often simply to follow the diegesis.

Sequences

A chief example of Eisenstein's influence concerns the use of rising sequences, typically for creating suspense and tension. As discussed in Chapter 4, it would appear that Eisenstein later nominated himself as the inspiration behind Meisel's machine music for the squadron encounter in *Potemkin* (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 236–7). It is therefore not too far-fetched to imagine that Eisenstein was behind or at least supportive of the continued use of similar sequences to accompany parts of *October*. Rather than *Folge* or *Sequenz*, the more usual German terms for a musical sequence, Meisel's letters and writings contain the term *Steigerung*, which can be translated as an intensification or a gradation (in the sense of a diatonic succession of chords). Until this point it was unusual and atypical of the composer to maintain one single musical idea over extended time spans, the squadron encounter in *Potemkin* and the ski-race in *Der heilige Berg* being notable exceptions, and it is significant that neither episode involved major scene changes. A more typical response for Meisel was to create an accompaniment which demarcated the scene changes, even short cutaways. For Meisel to follow one over-arching idea for a significant length of time, ignoring cutaways (despite their importance to Eisenstein's intellectual montage), would be contrary to his inclinations as a film composer. Such was Eisenstein's influence, however, that Meisel inevitably bent to his will and sequences became fundamental to the generation of large-scale episodes in this score.

The sequence is a perfect musical equivalent to Eisenstein's penchant for motivic clusters of visual effects which gradually accumulate in meaning and intensification. Eisenstein arguably over-used these accumulations in *October* and, unlike the squadron encounter from *Potemkin*, they rarely have any corresponding dissipation of tension. Their musical reflections in Meisel's score added to the general impression of monotony, for which Eisenstein has to share some blame. Wolfgang Thiel's criticism of the 'many tonally amorphous extensive rising

sequences without clear-cut musical highpoints' (Thiel 1981: 350) in Meisel's score for *October* (and *Berlin*) made no allowance for directorial design.

Several examples of sequences are discussed below, beginning with the overture. According to instructions on the first page of the piano score and printed orchestral parts, the overture – omitted in Fearon's reconstruction – is an extract from Act V. It was only notated once, in Act V, probably in an effort to save time and paper. This must have proved awkward in performance, because the BFI material has manuscript copies of the overture for most of the instruments in its set. This opening *maestoso* march is constructed from repetitions of a static nine-bar theme, with primitive perfect intervals in parallel motion decorating what is essentially a tonic pedal. Each repetition has minimal variation apart from being raised by a whole tone, creating a large-scale rising sequence. This nine-bar sequence is the main theme of the score, representing the idea and realization of the revolution, and has been named the 'Revolution march' in Figure 8.1. This theme is used repeatedly throughout the score at points directly involving Lenin (the physical embodiment of the revolution) and the development of the revolutionary plot. For example, the theme appears at the end of Act I when Lenin speaks to the masses outside Finland Station, Petrograd; in Act II when the 'July Days' demonstrators march to Bolshevik headquarters to seek Lenin; in Act V when 'The Revolution plan is explained'; later in Act V when time is running out for the Provisional Government to reply to the Bolshevik ultimatum; and at the end of Act VI when the Provisional Government is overthrown.

The majority of the sequences in the rest of the score are constructed from smaller rhythmic and melodic cells, usually only one or two bars in length. For example, Act I begins with the dissolution of the Russian monarchy in February, represented symbolically through crowds of workers using ropes to pull down a statue of Alexander III. Meisel responded to this with two statements of a simple four-bar martial theme, reproduced in Kershaw (1984: 48, example 1).

8.1 'Revolution march' (*Zehn Tage*, Act V: PS 82)

71 **Maestoso**

etc.

The composer then turned the first two bars into a sequence rising by semitones, beneath a relentless solo trumpet counter melody. The final two reiterations of the sequence are shown in the opening of Figure 8.2. The first crucial point of synchronization in the score is reached when all the ropes are in place and the head of the statue begins to wobble as the workers pull on the ropes (see tremolo chords in bars 39 and 41 of Figure 8.2). The sceptre, orb and limbs of the statue fall in succession, delaying the fall of the main torso for some seconds. The latter is comparatively brief, caught by the tremolo chord in bar 50 of Figure 8.2.

In Eisenstein's writings, the only discussion of Meisel's sojourns in Moscow contains a reference to the toppling and reassembling of this imperial statue:

When [Meisel] was writing [his score]—and to do so he attended the editing sessions in Moscow—the central heating in the screening-room was being repaired; there was an incredibly loud knocking throughout the building at No. 7 Maly Gnezdikovsky.

I later derided Edmund for writing into the score not only visual effects, but also the plumbers' hammering.

The score fully justified my complaints!

And there was the trick with the 'palindromic' music.

The point is that the film begins with frames which half symbolise the overthrow of the autocracy, depicted by the toppling of the memorial to Alexander III next to the Church of Christ the Saviour. . . .

[The] ‘collapse’ of the statue was shot ‘in reverse’ at the same time. The throne, with its armless and legless torso flew up on to its pedestal. Legs and arms, sceptre and orb flew up to join themselves on. . . .

And for that scene Edmund Meisel recorded the music in reverse, the same music that had been played ‘normally’ at the start. . .

But I do not suppose anyone noticed this musical trick. (Taylor 1995: 545–6)

Similarly, in a question-and-answer session with his students in the late 1940s, Eisenstein recalled that

First a statue was taken to pieces. Then it flew back together again. The music for the film had been written and the orchestral score was completed. It was also done backwards: that is, there was music for the statue being taken apart, and the same musical phrases were played backwards as it flew back together.

(Taylor 1996: 331)

Whereas the first quotation suggests the incident occurred during the November visit whilst Eisenstein was still editing the film, the second mentions that ‘the orchestral score was completed’, implying Meisel’s second visit to Moscow in March 1928. Eisenstein’s statements have never been formally compared against the surviving piano score, in which there is no evidence of retrograde motion. Whether this musical palindrome did temporarily exist in Meisel’s score at some point, or was a product of Eisenstein’s imagination, is uncertain. The whole of the opening scene is a rising arc of growing intensity as the workers surge upwards to rope the statue, culminating in the descent of the statue and the ensuing jubilation. Meisel’s music matches this upward trajectory, even when parts of the statue begin to fall, and only breaks into a majestic D major march for the ensuing scenes of jubilation (see bar 51 of Figure 8.2).

8.2 Proletarians topple the statue (Zehn Tage, Act I: PS 4-5)

Vivace
Tromp.

35

Denkmal vollkommen
mit Stricken umbunden

Bayonette hoch

40

Kopf wachelt
(Triangel)

pp *f* *f* *p* *f*

45

rit. *ff* *p*

50 Denkmal stürzt

f *p* *ff* *f*

Allegro moderato

Es lebe die provisorische
Regierung

etc.

When the statue later reassembles itself in Act III (PS 38), symbolizing a return to the *status quo*, there is quite different martial material in D major with no attempt to represent either the upward trajectory of the reassembled statue or the disillusionment of the proletarians. One possibility is that there is more significance in Eisenstein's words, namely that 'Meisel recorded the music in reverse', which may imply a physical manipulation of the material via recording onto gramophone discs. In this case, there would be no evidence in the score because Meisel may have intended to superimpose the retrograded material during live performance.

After the February Revolution when the bourgeois Provisional Government took power in Russia, the people assumed that the soldiers would be withdrawn from the war and that peace and prosperity would return. Instead the working class was betrayed: war continued and bread rationing was introduced (Taylor 2002: 24–6). The new regime's oppression of the working classes is portrayed symbolically by Eisenstein through images of a heavy artillery piece being slowly lowered from a Russian factory assembly line. This 'war machine', intercut with scenes of the Russian soldiers crouching in the trenches and of hungry women and children queuing in the snow for bread, metaphorically crushes the spirit and flesh of the Russian people. For the entire chain of events Meisel has a one-bar descending sequence over a bass line which itself gradually begins to ascend chromatically, this simple contrary motion acting like powerful mechanical 'jaws' to oppress the Russian people (see Figure 8.3).

8.3 War Machine (*Zehn Tage*, Act I: PS 10)

132 Allegro moderato

f

3

3

3

3

etc.

The episode where the bridge is raised literally and metaphorically to cut off the workers from the bourgeoisie ‘ranks second only to the Odessa Steps scene [in film history textbooks] as evidence of the emotional power of Soviet montage’ in ‘Eisenstein’s most famous experiment in expanding time through editing’ (Bordwell 2005: 86, 88). In a diary entry, dated 11 February 1928, Eisenstein declared:

I must compel Meisel not to underscore the bridge with music, but only with the sound of heaving, *ascending machinery*. A muffled roar, which gives way to a chopped metallic tremolo. Then a dead silence must begin, in which only a running machine can be heard. (Bulgakowa 1998: 39)

This desire tallies with Eisenstein’s handwritten annotations in German on Meisel’s typed ‘Musikdisposition’ (see Bulgakowa 1998: 88–9), which specify ‘machine’ and ‘mechanical’ next to the entry for the raising of the bridge and similarly for later scenes involving *Aurora* and for the storming of the Winter Palace. Some weeks prior to Eisenstein’s diary entry, Meisel had written to the director, enclosing a thematic idea for the raising of the bridge in his music sketches (Els and Edmund Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin 30 December 1927). The solution as it survives in the piano score – another one-bar rising sequence – duly eschews melody in favour of a constant rhythmic pulse beneath chromatic oscillations suggestive of the winding gear used to raise the bridge. The sequence begins at bar 149 in Figure 8.4 and continues until the dead horse finally falls into the water² (an action caught in the orchestra by a roll on the cymbal).

Prior to this new sequence, there is a series of seven bars accompanying the scene in which Konovalov, Interior Minister, telephones the order for the bridge to be raised. These few bars are more typical of the dialogue exchanges between the mother and Diotima in *Der heilige Berg* (discussed in Chapter 6). Although none of the minister’s statements exactly match the number of syllables suggested in the melodic patterns in the opening of Figure 8.4, there are some similar vocal inflections

² In the Alexandrov print, the horse falls into the water some frames later, after the first scenes of the jubilant bourgeoisie.

and use of augmented triads to suggest the urgency of the situation. There is another moment showing Meisel's penchant for vocalizations, which occurs during Kornilov's failed attack on Petrograd. A Bolshevik delegation wins over the invading Cossack forces, the so-called Wild Division, by promising 'bread, peace and land' (Taylor 2002: 52); their speeches are represented by an extensive trombone solo, marked *Quasi Recitativo* (bar 247, PS 47).

8.4 The order to raise the bridge (*Zehn Tage*, Act II: PS 29)

Titel: Konowolow Minister des Innern

8^{va} Fl.

Pos. *mf*

fz

145 „Zieht die Brücken hoch!“

„Die Arbeitsviertel sind vom Zentrum abzuschneiden“

Der Minister hängt den Hörer ab.

150 Brücke geht hoch etc.

tr. Pesante, in dauernder Steigerung

mf

Caricatures

In keeping with the propaganda of the 1920s and 1930s, the bourgeoisie were satirized through cruel exaggerated caricatures in all forms of Soviet art. Doubtless Eisenstein explained in copious detail to Meisel how he envisaged his characters, but Meisel would have been familiar with class stereotypes and using overt romanticism in a parodic fashion from his work with Piscator. Eisenstein parodies

the grandeur and pretension of the Winter Palace, using repetition and reversal, satirising Kerensky's ascent of the staircase as an act of hollow and pointless ambition, poking fun at the Women's Battalion, playfully toying with a variety of objects . . . [including] clocks . . . [and] the preening peacock. The Palace is another world, a lost world of crowns and crystal, contrasted with, and isolated from, the 'real' world outside, joining it only in the climax to the film.

(Taylor 2002: 78)

Eisenstein's chief target was Aleksandr Kerensky and his rapid rise from Minister of Justice to leader of the Provisional Government within four months. Here is Eisenstein's description of this scene from his essay 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' (1929):

Kerensky's rise to (untrammelled) power and dictatorship after July 1917. Comic effect is achieved by *intercutting titles denoting ever higher rank* ('Dictator', 'Generalissimo', 'Minister of the Navy and the Army', etc.) with five or six sequences of the staircase in the Winter Palace with Kerensky ascending the *same* flight each time.

Here the conflict between the kitsch of the ascending staircase and Kerensky treading the same ground produces an intellectual resultant: the satirical degradation of these titles in relation to Kerensky's nonentity.

Here we have a counterpoint between a verbally expressed, conventional idea and a pictorial representation of an individual who is unequal to that idea.

(Taylor 1988: 179)

The scene is a pun, 'based on the Russian word *lestnitsa* (stairs), as used in the phrase *ierarkhicheskaia lestnitsa*, or "table of military ranks"' (Bordwell 1988: 239). For the Alexandrov restoration, the compilers portrayed Kerensky through the second movement from Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 2, Op. 126 (1966). The main theme of this movement had rather risqué origins, being partly based on a saucy Odessa cabaret song, 'Bubliki, kupite bubliki!' ('Bagels, buy my bagels!'; see McBurney 2010). By juxtaposing this bawdy tavern song with Kerensky, the reference to bread provides an ironic reference to the starving proletarians during Kerensky's tenure. Meisel's solution was a simpler but effective musical interpretation of Eisenstein's metaphor, which he described thus:

Kerensky has a short, old-fashioned ‘Frisch, Fromm, Froh, Frei’³ military operetta theme, that is established in such a way that it continually repeats itself (to characterize his limitation) until the entrance into paradise [the Tsarina’s apartments] when it climaxes in a kitsch old-Heidelberg apotheosis.

(Els and Edmund Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 30 December 1927)

After a lengthy introduction which relentlessly oscillates between tonic and dominant, Meisel’s theme for Kerensky (Figure 8.5) is stated. Based on a simple rising G major scale, the theme is repeatedly thwarted in its attempts to develop by a return to the beginning, in the same way that Kerensky repeatedly climbs the same set of stairs. These repetitions occur at phrase and even bar level, the latter creating the effect of a needle being stuck in a gramophone disc.

8.5 Kerensky (*Zehn Tage*, Act I: PS 13)

Titel: Der Aufstieg
Flottes Marschtempo 180 etc.

Viol. Piccolo mf
 (Kl. Trommel gr. Tr. Beck)

The grandeur of the theme develops through increasing dynamics, orchestration and figuration as Kerensky reaches the top of the stairs, where he is devoured by the great doors leading into the Tsarina’s apartment and by the anus of the ornamental peacock (Tsvian 1993: 97–8), just as the theme reaches its final cadence. The whole is a witty caricature of the self-satisfied, ineffectual and effeminate Kerensky, who revels in the trappings of power.

Straight afterwards, there is a slower, poignant variation of Kerensky’s theme in G minor (reproduced in Kershaw 1984: 50, example 5) for contrasting scenes of emaciated women, queuing in the cold for bread. The psychological impact of this

³ A reference to the patriotic ‘4F’ movement and athletic clubs started by Friedrich Jahn in the nineteenth century. The slogan can be translated as ‘Fresh (in body and soul), Godfearing, happy, free’.

association was not possible in the British reconstructions, since Kerensky's ascent to power occurs some time after the bread queue scene in the Alexandrov print.

Kershaw (1984: 46 and 51, example 6) noted a similar major to minor contrast after the raising of the bridge. Here, a victorious E flat major march for the bourgeoisie's triumph over the workers contrasts with a more reflective variant in the minor for scenes of the dejected 1st Machine-Gun Corps, who were disarmed and paraded in humiliation because of their solidarity with the workers. Kershaw made an exaggerated claim regarding these minor variations, namely that

Moments like these, so rare as they are in *October*, show quite unquestionably, in my opinion, that Meisel not only possessed a genius for realizing the inner dynamic of a film sequence in music, but that he would also have been able to establish himself as a concert composer. (Kershaw 1984: 46)

In truth, Meisel was only following the age-old practice of turning a happy tune into a sad one, a technique fundamental to theme and variation form, as well as general thematic development and characterization in stage and concert works. In effect, this was a basic skill of improvisation required by silent-film accompanists, who were advised to develop an ability to manipulate themes 'by the means of rhythmical or modal variation, by extension or diminution, by change of tone register and by contrapuntal combination' (Lang and West 1970 [1920]: 8).

When Kornilov's 'Wild Division' of Cossacks is won over to the Bolshevik cause, the Cossacks socialize with the Petrograd army and each side performs a national dance. Eisenstein recalled how he cut these sections according to the rhythms of the traditional music:

In the film *October* there is the *lezghinka* episode. The 'Wild Division' is approaching Petrograd. They are met by workers' organisations and they fraternise. The Petrograd lot do a Russian dance and the 'Wild Division' respond with a *lezghinka*. Two rhythms meet. There the accumulation of montage was driven by the rhythm of the *lezghinka*. There was a precise coincidence. (Taylor 1996: 325–6)

Contrary to Eisenstein’s memory, or at least according to the order in both Meisel’s score and Alexandrov’s print, the Cossacks are first to perform their *lezghinka*, a national dance of the Caucasus region, followed by a solo dancer from the Petrograd army performing an energetic hopak.

Bordwell describes how Eisenstein ‘pushe[d] rhythmic editing to new limits’ in these dance scenes, sometimes presenting ‘shots only one frame long’ (Bordwell 2005: 84). Whether Eisenstein’s editing truthfully replicates the regular rhythmic pulse of the folkdances has not been ascertained. For this quasi-diegetic moment, Meisel employs folk-like melodies, structured in four-bar phrases over a drone bass. These melodies are combined in a simple quodlibet when images of the two dances are rapidly intercut (see Figure 8.6). It is highly probable that Eisenstein provided Meisel with the melodies, which appear to be sanitized simplifications of such folkdances rather than authentic melodies and are a further example of Eisenstein’s surprisingly conservative musical taste and knowledge. By contrast, the compilation for the Alexandrov print eschews Shostakovich entirely for more authentic ethnic dance music played on appropriate folk instruments.

8.6 The ‘Wild Division’ and Petrograd army unite (*Zehn Tage*, Act III: PS 52)

Shostakovich’s ballet score *The Bolt*, Op. 27 (1930–31), was an important source of satirical extracts for the Soviet compilers in 1967. They selected a witty polka (‘The Bureaucrat’ from Act I; or Ballet Suite, Op. 27a, No.2 ‘Polka’) for the Salvation Committee. The extract from ‘The Bureaucrat’ (Shostakovich 1987: 119), reproduced in Figure 8.7, starts out as a duet between piccolo and bassoon, followed

by a conversation between piccolo and raucous trombone. This sparse orchestration with instruments at opposite extremes of register is reminiscent of the section in Act I of Meisel's score for two flutes (or more probably piccolos, as in Alan Fearon's reconstruction), trumpet, trombone and side drum in unison rhythm (see Figure 8.8). This accompanies the scene where some faceless flunkies deliver one of the first decrees of the new Provisional Government, namely that they will continue to honour the commitments made to the Allied Forces in the war against Germany. In both Figures 8.7 and 8.8 the shallowness and self-importance of these bureaucrats is represented literally through 'hollow' scoring, their 'voices' made humorous through unmanly high pitches (Kerensky's bawdy cello theme in the Shostakovich compilation also shows this trait).

8.7 'The Bureaucrat' (Shostakovich, *The Bolt*)

[Allegretto]

The musical score for 'The Bureaucrat' is in 2/4 time and marked [Allegretto]. It features three staves: 2 Piccoli, 2 Fagotti, and Tr-ni. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 28-29) is marked *I Solo* and *p*. The Piccolo part (treble clef) plays a high, repetitive eighth-note pattern, while the Fagotti part (bass clef) plays a lower, repetitive eighth-note pattern. The second system (measures 30-31) continues the Piccolo part with a *f* dynamic and a *a 2* marking. The third system (measures 32-33) features the Tr-ni part (bass clef) with a *gliss. fff* marking and the Piccolo part with a *I Solo* marking. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

8.8 Provisional Government (*Zehn Tage*, Act I: PS 8)

106

Flute

8^{va}

mf (kl. Trommel im tematischen Rhythmus)

Tromp.

tr

Pos.

Titel: „Die provisorische Regierung“

etc.

Shostakovich's music in *The Bolt* has been described as 'vividly theatrical, the idiom is poster-like and graphic' with 'parodied trite tunes' for those being satirized (see Editor's note in Shostakovich 1987). This statement is equally applicable to Meisel's vignettes of Kerensky and the officials from the Provisional Government. Generally, Meisel and the Soviet compilers satirized similar parts of the film. For example, when one of the female soldiers inside the Winter Palace dreams of love on seeing the entwined lovers in Auguste Rodin's statue *Eternal Spring*, her return to feminine instincts is the symbolic catalyst for the remainder of the women's battalion to surrender their rifles. For this scene the Alexandrov print has an *adagio* for strings and harp (exact provenance unknown); similarly Meisel has a slow, syncopated section for strings in D major with a gently undulating melody, later strengthened by solo trumpet (PS 95–6, bars 287–308).

There are many musical similarities between Meisel's score for *October* and Shostakovich's *New Babylon* (1929), chief amongst which is the use of 'La Marseillaise'. Meisel had associated 'La Marseillaise' with the mutineers in *Potemkin*, but in the scores for *October* and *New Babylon* it is linked to the bourgeoisie to profess their false, self-serving patriotism in scenes of diegetic singing. Both composers accordingly used 'La Marseillaise' in a satirical manner, Meisel for the bourgeois Salvation Committee in *October* (see opening of Figure 8.9) and Shostakovich at several points for the Parisian elite in *New Babylon*. Shostakovich eventually combined 'La Marseillaise' with Offenbach's famous cancan in simple

counterpoint and transformed the revolutionary song into a cancan as the bourgeoisie incite the French army to attack the communards (Ford 2003). Whilst the impetus for ‘La Marseillaise’ in *New Babylon* is made explicit through the presence of some of the lyrics in the intertitles, it is unclear exactly what the Salvation Committee in *October* is singing. It is possible that Eisenstein decreed the use of ‘La Marseillaise’ at this point. Meisel could not resist a close synchronization of the exchanges between the Salvation Committee and the sailor forbidding them entrance to the Winter Palace. Single bars of high-pitched squawking woodwind (for the members of the Salvation Committee) are played *ad libitum* in alternation with bars containing chords for every shake of the sailor’s head as he refuses their demands. Once again, the ubiquitous rising chromatic scale is used to structure this section (see Figure 8.9 from bar 333 onwards).

Ultimately, Meisel’s caricatures are everyday instances of comic music for comic characters, ethnic colourings to distinguish between people from different geographical regions, and stylized romanticism for parodic effect. None of these would be out of place in the accompaniment to a typical sentimental American feature film from the 1920s or even earlier. Some of the contemporaneous German reviews regarded Eisenstein’s caricatures as a negative feature. The simplistic contrasts between the comic, indolent bourgeoisie (including the Mensheviks) and the bustling, heroic proletariat, were regarded as old-fashioned and predictable (see, for example, Olimsky 1928-04-03; Hi. 1928-04-03). None of the reviews mention the music accompanying these caricatures, suggesting that Meisel’s rare moments of contrast failed to make much impact against the prevailing tidal wave of pounding martial rhythms. Neither did it help the listener that three of these moments occur in quick succession within Act V, namely the harp music for the Mensheviks (discussed below), the love music for the Rodin statue, and the *Marseillaise* for the Salvation Committee.

8.9 The Salvation Committee (*Zehn Tage*, Act V: PS 97–8)

Allegretto
Der Bund zur Rettung des Vaterlandes *Pos.*

grotesk

330 *ad libitum*
groteske Quasselrei
Ob. Cl.
Cello glissando

Titel: Wir wollen zum Ministerrat
Bürger quatschen
Matrosenkopf 1 *Trp.* *f* *Pos.* *Takt ad libitum*
(Dazu Cello glissando) *Ob. Cl.*
Matrosenkopf 2 *Trp.* *f* *Pos.* *Takt ad libitum*
Bürger opponieren weiter, aber gesteigert!

Matrosenkopf 3 *Trp.* *f* *Pos.* *ad libitum*
Clar.
Gesteigerte Opposition
Matrosenkopf 4 *Trp.* *f* *Pos.* *ad libitum*

Titel: Halten Sie uns nicht auf
Opposition am Höhepunkt
Matrose wütend
ff Clarin. *hysterische Schreie* *ad libitum*
ff *3* *3* *3* *3* *etc.*

Visible sound

As Rudolf Arnheim stated, '[s]ensations of smell, equilibrium, or touch are, of course, never conveyed in a [silent] film through direct stimuli, but are suggested indirectly through sight' (Arnheim 1969: 37). Similarly, directors would suggest

sounds that were important to the diegesis through visual means, as in the example from *The Docks of New York* (dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1928) ‘where a shot is very cleverly made visible by the sudden rising of a flock of scared birds’ (Arnheim 1969: 37).

Eisenstein recalled in his memoirs how, in his silent films, he had ‘often sought a way of conveying something through a plastic construction composed of purely aural effects’ (Taylor 1995: 473). Eisenstein’s writings describe how, beginning with the accordion sequence in the first part of *Strike* (1925), he used photographic tricks such as double exposure and close ups in his silent films to convey sound through graphic means (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 232–3). In *October*, he further developed these techniques to create meaning through montage structures showing the effect caused by the ‘sound’. The first set of examples given below is similar to the instance cited from *The Docks of New York*, whereby sound-emitting objects are juxtaposed with images of their repercussions:

[V]isible objects [were] treated so as to suggest the way in which our hearing perceives them: the mobile machineguns which, as they were trundled along the flagstone floors of the Smolny Institute on the eve of the revolution, so disturbed the tender ears of the Mensheviks sitting behind the doors of their committee room; the visual interplay of different clocks striking the hours during the siege of the Winter Palace; the swaying of the glass chandeliers in the deserted palace, which conveyed the tinkling noise they made as they were caused to shudder by the gunfire outside on the Palace Square . . . These pictures were perceptually linked with the sound they made in reality.

(Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 233–4)

The bomb blasts and resultant swaying chandeliers are explicitly cued in Meisel’s piano score (PS 107, bars 483–5), using simple effects to mirror the contrasting iconic properties of the images (low/high, loud/soft). *Sforzando* chord clusters in a low register (played with the palm of the hand) catch the bomb blasts. These are answered by *pianissimo* tremolo chords with the suggested orchestration of strings

(playing behind the bridge), supplemented by the higher registers of triangle, glockenspiel, xylophone and flute trills for the tinkling glass.

Eisenstein's next example evoked the sound of harp music via non-diegetic inserts showing hands playing imaginary harps or balalaikas, and statues holding harps to convey the idea of 'harping on the same old tune':

[W]e inserted harps and balalaikas in the scene of the Mensheviks' speeches. And these harps were not harps, but a figurative symbol of the mellifluous speeches of Menshevik opportunism at the Second Congress of Soviets in 1917. The balalaikas were not balalaikas but an image of the tiresome strumming of these empty speeches in the face of the gathering storm of historical events.

(Taylor 1996: 231; from the year 1942)

Eisenstein helps the audience by explaining in an intertitle that the Mensheviks were 'harping on' in their speeches, before these non-diegetic inserts appear. What is perhaps less apparent, is that this 'harping on' is linked to earlier harp images when members of the Provisional Government are waiting around for their inevitable demise and one minister idly strums on a harp etched into a window (see Figure 8.10). Meisel thematically links this scene with the Menshevik speakers, portraying the Mensheviks – in their desire for peaceful negotiations – to be as ineffectual as the Provisional Government. The martial theme in Figure 8.10 for the Provisional Government is transformed into a languid romantic melody in three-four time for the first Menshevik speaker, played by muted trumpet and solo violin in octaves over a rapid arpeggio figuration, the main reason for Meisel's extravagant requirement for two harps. The opening is reproduced in Figure 8.11 and a more extensive extract is available in Kershaw (1984: 53).⁴ Figure 8.11 represents a rare departure from common-time. The only other example occurs near the opening of the score, where the melody accompanying images of the Orthodox priests blessing the new regime has a Russian modal flavour in changing metres (see Figure 8.12), reminiscent of the

⁴ Kershaw's associated discussion (page 47) erroneously refers to Example 9 when it should refer to Example 8.

second movement from Tchaikovsky's String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 11. In the Mensheviks' sickly-sweet harp music (Figure 8.11), the change in metre is not even necessarily apparent to the ear, because the melody pauses before the anacrusis in virtually every bar. A final comparison with Shostakovich's score for *New Babylon* is pertinent at this point. Whilst both *New Babylon* and *October* have a considerable amount of martial material because of their respective subject matters, Shostakovich shows greater skill by introducing more temporal and rhythmic variety in his vignettes of the bourgeoisie, their decadence represented through superficial waltzes, cancons and galops.

8.10 The Provisional Government waits (*Zehn Tage*, Act V: PS 89)

Moderato
 Titel: Die provisorische Regierung
 Trp. Clar. 3

8.11 First Menshevik speaker (*Zehn Tage*, Act V: PS 93)

Andante espresso
 1. Redner
 Solo Viol. 8va höher
 Trp. gest.

(Läufe harfenmässig spielen!)

8.12 Orthodox priests celebrate the victory (*Zehn Tage*, Act I: PS 6)

Moderato
 Titel: Für alle?

A closer variant of the theme from Figure 8.10 accompanies the second Menshevik speaker, now increased in tempo and with banjo chords in the orchestra alluding to the balalaika images (see Figure 8.13).

8.13 Second Menshevik speaker (*Zehn Tage*, Act V: PS 94)

Allegro (Kongress)
 271 *sempre staccato* 3 3 3 3 2. Redner 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 etc.
mf
sempre arpeggio
 (Akkorde möglichst auf Banjo spielen bis Takt 285)

Eisenstein stated that his metaphoric use of harps had been an attempt ‘to convey by pictorial means what could easily have been done by having even the simplest soundtrack to give an ironic commentary, in sound, on the content of these speeches’ (Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 234). However, the intertitle and the non-diegetic inserts consolidate the meaning in a manner that stylized Romantic harp music alone might not be able to achieve. Equally, Meisel’s duplication of the maxim through music is not redundant but an essential aid to meaning, since music participates in the construction of cinematic characters and cinematic effects, rather than their reproduction (Cook 1998: 86).

The final example of visualized sound is the most complex. By a series of iris diaphragms and other camera tricks, Eisenstein wanted to create the effect of the *Aurora*’s salvo hitting the Winter Palace and its reverberations literally rumbling through its myriad rooms, until it finally reached the room where the petrified members of the Provisional Government were hiding:

The final diaphragm opened to reveal the last room, in which sat the petrified ministers. They shuddered: the echo had reached them. . . .

The improbability, in realistic terms, of the Provisional Government hearing the *Aurora*’s salvo through a window giving on to the Neva only as an echo rumbling along a corridor is redeemed by its symbolic significance. . . .

They only became aware of that process when it was too late: only when the

actual, physical wave of the insurgent masses had rolled along those same corridors and reached the door of their little refuge among the palace's thousand rooms. In this sense, the echo of the *Aurora's* shot rushing through those rooms was, as it were, a forerunner of the human avalanche that overwhelmed the palace, sweeping aside 'all who opposed it' like the blizzard of history.

(Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 234–5; cf. Taylor 1995: 473–4)

The manner in which Meisel proposed to represent these reverberations and other aural effects is intricately entwined with Meisel's work for Piscator during the autumn of 1927 and early months of 1928. In particular, there is the rare opportunity to forge concrete connections between Meisel's (possibly unrealized) intentions for his *October* score and the sound recordings Meisel made for Piscator's most ambitious production to date, *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk*, based on the satirical anti-war novel by Jaroslav Hasek (published in Prague, 1921–3). *Schwejk* had its Berlin premiere on 23 January 1928.

Meisel's sound recordings for *Schwejk*

Piscator's conception for *Schwejk*, used

two treadmills, or endless belts, which would roll Schwejk on or off . . . The scenes in turn could pass across the stage as cut-out objects and people, or be seen moving past on the projection screen; there was no set in the usual sense.

(Willett 1978: 91)

There were forty-five film inserts, mostly cartoon sequences drawn by George Grosz (as were the cut-outs), but also some footage of Prague (Tode 2004: 29–30). Meisel pre-recorded all his incidental music, sound effects and even some of the dialogue for this production when the speakers were puppets (Innes 1972: 82). This desire to 'mechanize the entire stage acoustic' is described in his contribution to the Piscatorbühne programme from October 1927, under the heading 'Neue Wege der Bühnen-Musik' ('New ways for stage music'):

The Piscatorbühne, the sponsor and implementor of all new ideas, is giving me the opportunity to carry out a notion which for a long time has dominated my

plans for the stage acoustic: the reproduction of music and above all sound effects via gramophone and loudspeakers. The Deutsche-Grammophon-A.-G., who are currently demonstrating their new, largest device, the Polifar, showed the greatest interest in the recordings of my composed sound effects, in which my most recent invention, the motor-driven sound-effects machine [*Geräuschapparat*], plays the leading role. (Meisel 1927-10)

Meisel mentioned his sound-effects machine, or *Geräuschapparat*. The German noun *Geräusch* can be translated as sound, noise (especially if it is disagreeable) or sound-effect. I will be using the latter translation and in the plural; others, such as Kershaw (1979a: 5), preferred to use ‘noise’. There is a rather unflattering photograph of Meisel standing by his invention, which shows the invention to be constructed on a customized desk, rather than a free-standing ‘machine’ (see Figure 8.14). Some weeks after the premiere of *Schwejk*, the reporter Fritz Zielesch visited Meisel in his special ‘laboratory’ at Piscator’s theatre, the Theater am Nollendorfpfplatz, Berlin, and described the apparatus as follows:

Meisel has built a ‘sound-effects desk’ [*Geräuschtisch*], a music machine for the manufacture of machine music. On a solid sound board is raised, to the layman’s eye, a tangled confusion of every material imaginable in every shape imaginable. The task, to find acoustic methods of expression for the sound world of modern everyday life. The musical means of the mid-romantic and idyllic eras were insufficient for the musical illustration of suspended fly-wheels, clanking grab arms, rushing spindles, groaning piston rods, whirring motors, crackling balloon tyres and the whole boiling pot of the modern factory, the city street and the means of transport of the twentieth century. The experience of this modern world of sound waves was not completely served by the . . . instruments of the traditional orchestra. The sound-effects desk should therefore open up a new sound world. Small electrically powered hammers strike in mechanically regular rhythms against tuned metal spirals, against narrow wooden cams, against leather, glass, brass, tin; acoustically constructed discs rotate; a conveyor belt rustles; Theremin’s ether-music permits a tremulous sound of the spheres to ascend; one even believes to have heard the sound of a passing car, then the frenzied noise of one factory after another joins in, then the Zeppelin engines whirr, a machine-gun hammers in staccato, the sound of the street beats in the distance. And one discovers what kind of wondrous music out of rhythm and acoustic noise the dead material

contains. . . . [I]t is the music of our working day, the perpetual world of oscillation in our nerves, here not reproduced in its raw state but rhythmically formed, and interspersed, permeated, entwined around the sounds of strings, percussion, trumpets, drums.

(Zielesch 1928-02-26; reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 61–2)

‘Theremin’s ether-music’, produced via the theremin, or ‘etherphone’ as it was then called, had been demonstrated by its Russian inventor at an International Exposition held in Frankfurt during the summer of 1927 (Glinsky 2000: 51). Léon Theremin’s subsequent tour of several German cities, including four public demonstrations in Berlin between September and November 1927, was a phenomenal success, due to his showmanship and the novel sounds emanating from the electronic instrument (Glinsky 2000: 55–7). Given his fascination with new technology and the press phenomenon generated by Theremin’s performances, Meisel would have known about the invention and probably attended one of these demonstrations. Theremin had demonstrated two versions of his etherphone in Germany, the newest one ‘a steep, wedge-shaped mahogany box with vertical pitch and horizontal loop antennas, placed on a small table’ and an earlier prototype containing ‘a tilted wooden music rack atop a small rectangular box [with a] single, vertical pitch antenna shot up from the right side’ (Glinsky 2000: 51). In Meisel’s photograph (Figure 8.14), there is a small wooden box with an antenna connected, just visible in the far corner of his sound-effects desk behind the music in his hand: this is potentially the source of Meisel’s ‘ether-music’.

Meisel also played some discs to Zielesch during his visit in February 1928, which included reproductions of various sound effects intended for stage use:

‘Battle noises’ [*Schlachtgeräusche*] . . . the soundworld of shrapnel, machine-gunfire, aeroplane engines, then ‘Train at the front’ and ‘Train Station’ and – ‘Stomach pump’, an infernal monotonous concert based on the sonic experience of the hospital . . .

(Zielesch 1928-02-26)



8.14 Meisel at his ‘sound-effects desk’ (Source: Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt)

Presumably these were the discs Meisel had used during the recent *Schwejk* performances, and, apart from the peculiar ‘Stomach pump’ sound-scenario, the descriptions are similar to the titles of four discs listed in Sudendorf (1984: 97), reproduced in Table 8.1. These discs have Polydor catalogue numbers, so were available to purchase from Deutsche Grammophon. The majority have catalogue numbers for the Polydor Cinema series, which included mood-pieces (for example ‘All’armi! All’armi’ [‘To arms! To arms!’] by Becce, Nr. Ci 715, 1929) as well as sound effects.

Meisel created a related series of six double-sided, general-purpose sound-effects discs (lasting approximately three minutes each side) for Deutsche Grammophon at some point between October 1927, when he had publicized the company’s interest in his recordings (Meisel 1927-10), and mid-July 1928, when

notice of their imminent availability for public purchase was announced in the trade press (*Film-Kurier* 1928-07-05). Here is how they were marketed:

The sound-effects studies of Edmund Meisel, the well known specialist in this area, constitute a highly interesting novelty in the practice of recording. These discs are essential for cinema and theatre, they replace an entire arsenal of sounds. Some in the home would also find pleasure in these delightful illusion-creating discs.

(Deutsche Grammophon advertisement, undated, in Goergen 1995: 14)

The titles of these six discs are listed in Table 8.2, some of which are identical to the four *Schwejk* discs listed in Table 8.1. Two discs, Nos. 19848 and 19853, survive in the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin; the rest may still exist in private collections.

‘Street Noises’ (No. 19853), ‘Train moving’ and ‘Arrival and departure of a train’ (No. 19848) all include a variety of spoken voices in several languages. Whilst the traffic sounds in ‘Street Noises’ do not appear to be purely orchestral simulations and suggest that Meisel’s sound-effects desk was the main source, ‘Machine Noises’ (No. 19853) and the chugging train simulations have more audible use of woodwind, brass, piano and percussion instruments. Herring reviewed these discs for *Close Up* and also struggled to ascertain which effects were created by orchestral instruments:

It was Herr Meisel’s idea, as he told me in London, to go direct to sound and orchestrate it . . . Not all of these records are of the actual noises, however – there is a study in Rhythm which to my crass ear sounds instrumental . . . The Bombardment also seemed to me instrumental, though I am prepared to believe it was not. Of the others, the most easily appreciated is the Machine Noises, where the rhythm is very beautiful, and the Start and Arrival of a Train grows on one. But they are all exceptionally exciting, and show how noise itself can be taken up and composed and given form. (Herring 1929-05: 84–5)

8.1 Meisel's sound-effects discs for *Schwejk*

Polydor Nr. 67907	(Seite A) Eisenbahnfahrt bis zur Notbremse (Seite B) Ankunft und Abfahrt eines Zuges
Polydor Cinema Nr. Ci 2013	Schlachtenlärm II
Polydor Cinema Nr. Ci 2029	Großkampftag I
Polydor Cinema Nr. Ci 2030	Großkampftag II

Source: Sudendorf (1984: 97)

8.2 Meisel's sound-effects discs for Deutsche Grammophon

Order No.	Class	Title in German catalogue	Title in English Polydor catalogue 1929
1984 <u>8</u>	2M	Geräuschmusik I (Eisenbahnfahrt bis zur Notbremse) Geräuschmusik II (Ankunft und Abfahrt eines Zuges)	Train moving until pulling of the emergency brake Arrival and leave [<i>sic</i>] of a Train
1984 <u>9</u>	2M	Geräuschmusik III (Schlachtenlärm I) Geräuschmusik IV (Schlachtenlärm II)	Bombardement [<i>sic</i>]
1985 <u>0</u>	2M	Geräuschmusik V (Choralmusik I) Geräuschmusik VI (Choralmusik II)	Sacred Music (titled 'Music of the Heavenly Hosts' in Herring 1929-05: 84)
1985 <u>1</u>	2M	Geräuschmusik VII (Fahrender Eisenbahnzug) Geräuschmusik VIII (Bahnhofsgeschrei)	Train Noises of a Railway Station
1985 <u>2</u>	2M	Geräuschmusik IX (Rhythmus I) Geräuschmusik X (Rhythmus II)	Rhythm
1985 <u>3</u>	2M	Geräuschmusik XI (Straßengeräusche) Geräuschmusik XII (Maschinengeräusche)	Street Noises Machine Noises

Sources: Goergen (1995: 14); Deutsche Grammophon (1929: 129)

Many cinemas were already equipped with gramophone technology to provide general entertainment and even illustrate films via cheaper mechanical means. There had been a variety of mechanical inventions marketed to cinema owners for the production of sound effects throughout the silent period. By recording ready-made sound scenarios onto discs, Meisel was creating something more up to date. He was not alone in his attempt to exploit the potential of the sound-effects market: his discs are listed in the English Polydor catalogue for 1929 alongside a similar, more extensive, set of effects music for orchestra by Walter Gronostay, a pupil of Schoenberg (Deutsche Grammophon 1929: 129).

Goergen has claimed that the six Deutsche Grammophon discs in Table 8.2 were ‘intended for the scoring of Eisenstein’s . . . *October*’, but were used ‘for the first time in Piscator’s production of . . . *Schwejk*’ (Goergen 1995: 15). Some of the sound scenarios in the discs from Tables 8.1 and 8.2 – such as train stations and warfare – are appropriate to the plots in both *Schwejk* (see Willett 1978: 90–5) and *October*, as well as being suitable for general purposes. However, Meisel only decided to use pre-recorded effects in his *October* score after their successful employment in *Schwejk* (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 29 January 1928). He informed Eisenstein that he intended to use the Polyfar apparatus, but without clarifying the content or purpose of any pre-recorded discs; it is unclear whether a separate set of discs was ever created for *October*. He did however state that his sound-effects desk would be incorporated for the use of ether-waves to represent the symbolic reverberations of the gunfire through the Winter Palace, presumably through isomorphic waves of sound rolling through the building in tandem with Eisenstein’s visual effects.

The extent to which Meisel realized his intentions to incorporate pre-recorded sound effects and his sound-effects desk in live performances of his *October* score is not obvious. Although a press release described the forthcoming premiere as having ‘a special accompaniment with a series of musical-technical innovations’ (*Lichtbild-*

Bühne 1928-04-02), none of the reviews accessed specifically mention the physical presence of the sound-effects desk or the use of pre-recorded discs. Pringsheim's jibe, 'what about the ether waves?' (Pringsheim 1928-04), implies that Meisel had announced his intended use of ether waves in the press, but that they had failed to materialize. There is one definite indication in the printed percussion short-score for the use of Meisel's *Geräuschorgel*, namely in the opening of Act VI (Kershaw 1984: 44). This would be at the point of the symbolic reverberations of the salvos from the *Aurora* during the storming of the Winter Palace, as Meisel had originally desired. For more than 100 bars there is a continuous cacophony of two timpani, bass drum, cymbals and side-drum, pitting simple cross rhythms against one another, supplemented by thunder sheets and the sound-effects desk. The 'output' of Meisel's invention is notated as repeated *tremolando* semibreves (see Figure 8.15, below), without further performance indications.

8.15 The storming of the Winter Palace (*Zehn Tage*, opening of Act VI; printed percussion short-score)

Breit und wuchtig

The musical score is for percussion instruments in common time (C). It consists of five staves:

- Kl. Tr.** (Klein-Trommel): Notated in bass clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final eighth note.
- Gr. Tr. und Beck.** (Groß-Trommel und Becken): Notated in bass clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final eighth note.
- I. Pk. in A** (I. Paß in A): Notated in bass clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final eighth note.
- Bleche** (Blech): Notated in bass clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final eighth note.
- II. Pk. in A** (II. Paß in A): Notated in bass clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final eighth note.
- Geräuschorgel** (Geräuschorgel): Notated in bass clef with a common time signature. The first measure contains a series of eighth notes, followed by a quarter rest, and then a series of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final eighth note.

The example is taken from one of the busiest sections for the percussionists, where there is a requirement for seven players simultaneously, and potentially an eighth when the tam-tam is added a short while later. These combinations of cross-rhythms represent the height of Meisel's rhythmical complexity in *October*, achieved by the

superimposition of several simple martial patterns, and can hardly be compared with the demands, say, Stravinsky made of his percussionists in *The Rite of Spring*.

A comment in a later review of *Der blaue Expreß* welcomes Meisel's new more melodious style since returning from England and remarks that '[n]o gunpowder goes off, [and there is] no extreme rhythmic cacophony' (J. 1930-10-21). If it is this was a reference to *October*, it implies that there may have been live cannon fire during the screenings at the Tauentzien-Palast. However, Meisel's new invention could also simulate gunfire. He had informed Eisenstein that: 'Yesterday, in honour of your 30th birthday, we fired off a gun salute from my sound-effects desk, whose effect you will experience for yourself in the *October*-music' (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 29 January 1928).

Eisenstein emphasized particular sound effects visually at strategic points in his diegesis, which Meisel used as synchronization points to be 'caught' by the orchestra (typically the percussion). These are usually 'shock' effects, indicating imminent danger or the consequences of previous action. Some examples include the artillery shell fire in Act I (PS 9, bar 116), which signals the resumption of war after the Provisional Government takes power; the machine-gun fire scattering the demonstrators on Nevsky Prospekt during the 'July Days' episode in Act II (PS 25, bar 79); images of factory whistles sounding the alarm when news reaches Petrograd that Kornilov has an army advancing on the city (the intertitle 'The republic is in danger!', preceded by a siren in Meisel's score; PS 35, bar 24); and whistles blowing for the train bringing Kornilov's Cossack troops to march on Petrograd.

Prepared factory sirens and whistles were an established part of Soviet mass celebrations, due mainly to Arseny Avraamov, who had used them to intone revolutionary songs in his 'Symphonies of Sirens'. These were outdoor extravaganzas held in various Soviet cities on the first, second, fifth and sixth anniversaries of the revolution. The most famous example was staged in Baku harbour in 1922, incorporating 'the foghorns of the Caspian Sea Fleet, machine guns,

hydroplanes, motor vehicles and choirs' (Edmunds 2000: 72–3). Whilst Avraamov's Baku extravaganza has been described as a 'precursor of the *musique concrète* movement' (Lobanova 2001), the expression *musique concrète* refers specifically to music prepared from recorded sounds, either natural or man-made, and 'not, as is frequently thought, . . . to the musical use of noises ([since] any sound is concrete)' (Dhomont 2001). According to this criterion, Meisel's pre-recorded sound-effects discs were therefore a precursor to *musique concrète*, as Kershaw (1984: 55) has suggested.

Was Eisenstein a co-composer of the score?

The evidence discussed above shows that Eisenstein's descriptions of scenes were, in the main, faithfully represented in Meisel's accompaniment and that the musical caricatures parody the intended targets of Eisenstein's satirical lens. This suggests that Eisenstein, despite his ill-health during Meisel's first visit to Moscow, was able to describe the film in sufficient detail and with typical zeal, providing – at least in part – a virtual 'temp track' or blueprint for Meisel to follow. Yet, despite wanting 'machine music' and mechanical, rhythmic pulsation to underscore various points in *October* (such as the raising of the bridge), Eisenstein later derided Meisel in his unpublished essay on rhythm from 1938 for using 'naked rhythm' in his scores post-*Potemkin* with disastrous results:

Why was 'his Expressionist style, with its stress on rhythm . . . far ahead' of all the other films but not *Potemkin*? Because that stress on rhythm, above all, grew directly out of the demands made by the film itself and . . . by the director, not as *style* but as a *specific expressive mode*; . . . I am afraid that Meisel, fascinated by the effectiveness of that approach in *Potemkin* where it emerged as an imperative from the depths of the film itself, then went on to develop it mechanically into a method, a style, a 'school'. . . . The use of naked rhythm for its paradoxical effect in a sound-score proved to be very successful in the case of the specific requirements of *The Battleship Potemkin*, but it could not possibly become or remain a satisfactory method . . . for the musical score of every other film. . . . Meisel got stuck in the rut of rhythm as such. . . .

Naturally, with the transition to the significantly broader scope and subtle demands of the musical score of a sound film, the harsh atonality of the ‘rhythmic school’ was bound to sound like an archaic survival and an organically alien element. I believe it is along these lines that we must seek to understand what one might call the ‘triumph and disaster’ of the history of Edmund Meisel’s contribution to film music.

(Glenny and Taylor 2010 [1991]: 237–9)

Eisenstein neglected to admit that the only Meisel score he had heard in its entirety was *Potemkin*, as conducted by the composer in London (November 1929). Though unable to attend the Berlin premiere of *Zehn Tage* in April 1928, the director had heard Meisel play selections from the score on piano during his visits to Moscow and had been sent thematic sketches. Eisenstein had seen Ruttmann’s *Berlin* during the conference of independent filmmakers at La Sarraz, Switzerland (September 1929), but it had been screened silently. It is also unlikely that Eisenstein had witnessed any of Meisel’s sound-film work, most of which was made during the director’s European tour and extended stay in America. Furthermore, Eisenstein was unaware that Meisel had eventually turned his back on atonality, developing a more melodious style after his stay in London (see Chapter 13). Eisenstein’s ‘opinion’ was therefore secondhand, culled from the brief discussion in London’s *Film Music* (1936: 93–4), which Eisenstein quoted in his 1938 essay. Whilst it is true that aspects of Meisel’s *October* score demonstrate that the composer did become ‘stuck in the rut of rhythm’, that rut had been made with Eisenstein’s approval and encouragement.

Kershaw summarized Meisel’s score as:

thickly instrumented with strong brass and inordinately accentuated percussion. It would sound insufferably repetitive and monotonous as concert music: it relies almost continuously on bare parallel fifths and symmetrical four-plus-four bar phrases. Over long stretches of screen images there is a constant hammering rhythm to be heard, which meets with no dilution through melodic diversity or harmonic modulation. Meisel’s score is essentially a score of harmonized sound-effects, whereby the instrumental parts develop as an extension of the dominating percussion instruments. So the entry of the noise-

organ in the sixth act is the highpoint of a score which was actually intended for a noise orchestra. (Kershaw 1984: 44)

The dense scoring, constantly active percussion and reliance on martial rhythmic patterns are the three features which created the relentless monotony, cacophony and extreme decibel levels criticized in contemporaneous reviews. At two points in the score, to accompany troop deployments in Act IV (PS 56–7, before *Aurora* appears) and Act V (PS 86–8), Meisel even created the simplest of marches from one repeating bare fifth chord (later alternating with a chord one tone lower) and a ‘melody on 1 note’. The second and more substantial appearance of this march consists of around forty bars, the final eleven repeated *ad libitum* with increasing volume and tempo. Here the monotony is quite deliberate and is described as such in the score as ‘Marsch . . . spezifische Einfachheit Monotonie’ [‘March . . . specifically straightforward monotony’]. It is my contention that Eisenstein wanted and may even have demanded the monotony, cacophony and sheer hammering in Meisel’s score. Here, for example, are Eisenstein’s thoughts regarding the purpose of [film] music, as recorded in one of Meisel’s articles on their collaboration, in the manner of a verbatim account of a master’s words to his eager pupil:

[Eisenstein] is of the opinion that “The purpose of music is to focus the spectator keenly on the film. It must unsettle and inflame, the intensity of its sound cannot be big enough. It has to guide the public and it is to be deplored if it does not meet the demands of this task and neuters the receptiveness of the public through pleasing musical accompaniment!”

(Meisel 1928-04; similar account in Meisel 1928-01-26)

Meisel, electrified by Eisenstein’s opinion, carried out the director’s wishes to the full, particularly that ‘the intensity of its sound cannot be big enough’. Given the duration of the film, Meisel’s score, despite occasional moments of contrast, does seem to justify the contemporaneous condemnation of being relentless in its hammering on the audience’s eardrums.

Part Four

1928–1929:

Sound-film experiments

9 *Deutsche Rundfunk / Tönende Welle*

Meisel's earliest foray into sound film is connected with one particular sound-film pioneer, Guido Bagier, who worked for Ufa between 1922 and 1927 as producer and musical advisor; two of his original accompaniments are listed in Table 2.2. Bagier's early career at Ufa has been documented by Jossé (1984: 233–6) and Bock and Töteberg (1992: 244), a summary of which is provided below. In 1923, Ufa asked Bagier to assess the viability of the Tri-Ergon sound-on-film process, developed by three German engineers (Hans Vogt, Joseph Massolle and Josef Engl). Despite successful demonstrations to private and public audiences in 1921–22 and Bagier's positive report, Ufa did not sign a contract with Tri-Ergon until the middle of 1925. Bagier was then appointed artistic director of the new Tri-Ergon department, where he produced and wrote the music for Ufa's first sound short, *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (*The Little Match Girl*). According to his own later *roman à clef*, the premiere on 20 December 1925 was a fiasco due to problems with the playback equipment (Bagier 1943: 420–21). Ufa was currently in dire financial straits and scrapped its sound-film studio early in 1926.

Bagier salvaged what he could and relocated a reduced team to alternative premises. They recommenced sound-film work in May 1926, making simple static films of operatic scenes, vaudeville acts, and well-known personalities from literary and political circles. These new films impressed the Ufa directors, who agreed to increase the sound-film budget and allow Bagier's department bigger facilities. Bagier made some more sound shorts in a similar vein, which were successfully received by the public in early March 1927. His renewed hope for the future of sound film in Germany was soon shattered: on 5 March 1927 the Hugenberg-Gruppe took over Ufa and, as part of their initial cost-cutting measures, closed down the Tri-Ergon department, dismissing Bagier and his team. Ufa announced in the press that they

were withdrawing from talking-films for the foreseeable future, just as sound film was becoming a viable commercial investment in America.

Scant progress was made for the next few years. During this fallow period, some pioneering sound films were shown with original scores at special 'Film and Music' sessions during the Baden-Baden contemporary chamber-music festivals held in 1927–9. Full details of the festival programmes are available in SWR (2008). Many of the composers who wrote film music for these festivals belonged to the leading avant-garde musical circles of Europe. Their scores were composed for a variety of film genres, including American cartoons (Hindemith and Toch), newsreels (Milhaud), and abstract films by Ruttmann and Richter (Eisler and Hindemith). Ruttmann's abstract experimental film *Opus 3* (1924) was shown twice at the 1927 festival with an original score for chamber orchestra by Eisler, firstly as a silent film with the music performed live and synchronized using Blum's Musikchronometer, and then as a sound film (no longer extant) using the Tri-Ergon process (Goergen 1989: 107). Bagier, now working for Tri-Ergon-Musik A.G. (founded by Massolle in 1926), had supervised the sound-film recording. He also gave a short talk at the festival, followed by the screening of more sound shorts. It is perhaps surprising, given Meisel's recent work with Ruttmann on *Berlin*, that the composer was not also involved in this or the subsequent Baden-Baden festivals. However, the primary intention of these Baden-Baden performances was to illustrate not the film action but the film optics through motoric activity. Siebert (2001: 454) described the scoring methods as being diametrically opposed in style of material and instrumentation to mainstream cinema accompaniment and therefore of no consequence to its practice or history. This echoes a contemporaneous description of these events as 'an aesthetic game' (Mersmann and Strobel 1928: 425), which did not address issues regarding the improvement of mainstream film music. Despite his reputation for scores full of noise and rhythm, which marked him as being 'avant-garde' within the commercial film-world, Meisel was not considered part of the 'serious music' avant-garde circle.

In any case, Meisel's general approach to film scoring closely imitated the screen action and was nearer to mainstream practices than first hearing might suggest.

In July 1928 the German State Radio commissioned Tri-Ergon-Musik A.G. to produce a sound film for the opening of the fifth German Radio Exhibition in Berlin, to be held the following month (Sudendorf 1984: 29). Bagier chose Ruttmann to direct the project – basically an advertising film – and it was probably Ruttmann's idea to propose Meisel as composer. Bagier did not recollect Meisel's contribution, erroneously naming Zeller as the composer (Bagier 1943: 458). For three weeks from the middle of July onwards, a team of cameramen toured the regions surrounding the nine biggest radio stations in Germany and filmed radio broadcasts, speech, music and sounds emanating from city streets, leisure parks and major industrial sites. The quality of their recordings was only evident once Ruttmann had developed their footage back in Berlin (Brodmerkel 1953: 243; cited in Goergen 1989: 32). Meisel appears to have become involved towards the end of the project, from mid-August onwards (*Film-Kurier* 1928-08-14), experimenting with various combinations of studio and field recordings to achieve the most artistic blends (Meisel 1928-09-13). There is no information regarding the instrumental forces Meisel may have employed for his composed sections, but Meisel may have incorporated his sound-effects desk.

The first reel of the film was shown as part of the exhibition's opening ceremony, the full film later that same day. Additional screenings, with the film entitled *Tönende Welle*, took place during 19–25 September at the Tauentzien-Palast in Berlin as part of a Tri-Ergon sound-film programme, entitled 'TOKI: Der erste Ton-Kino-Spielplan der Tri-Ergon-Musik A.G.'. The contents of *Deutscher Rundfunk* are described in the registration card (Prüfung-Nr. 19946), a surviving TOKI programme (reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 30), and also by Bagier (1943: 457–8). A second registration card (Prüfung-Nr. 29210) exists for a much shorter version of the film approved on 10 June 1931, the film reduced to about half its

original length and bearing the alternative title of *Tönende Welle*. Neither version of the film is extant.

Reviewers who attended the Radio Exhibition screenings praised the impressive reproduction of natural sounds, such as street noises, marching soldiers, hammering machines, steam ships and zoo animals (for example, P. M. 1928-09-01). One, Ernst Jäger (1928-09-01), described the reproduction of absolute music as less appealing, but it is unclear whether his remark was specifically directed at Meisel's original extracts, or at some of the recordings of pre-existing music. A sound-film recording of the overture from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* had been played prior to the screening of *Deutscher Rundfunk* (Bagier 1943: 471) and the film itself contained extracts from Bizet's *Carmen*, an aria from Handel's *Hercules*, organ music, and various accompanied songs (Prüfung-Nr. 19946). Meisel's music is barely mentioned by the reviewers, a rare exception being Kracauer, who found it all 'acoustically too much and even more badly composed: namely by Edmund Meisel, whose music accompanies the film for long stretches . . . and appears to have been manufactured by the kilometre' (Kracauer 1928-10-12; reproduced in Mülder-Bach 2004: 122–5). These 'long stretches' tally with the information on the registration card (Prüfung-Nr. 19946), namely that Meisel's contribution was a series of cues – indicated by *Musik* or *Musik und Geräusch* – filling in the gaps between the field recordings. Moreover, Kracauer regarded the presence of music in a sound film as superfluous: 'if, for example, a waterfall appears on the screen, of course no-one wants to hear any other music than the rushing waterfall'. Karl Brodmerkel, a sound engineer who worked with Bagier on *Deutscher Rundfunk* and other sound films between 1928 and 1931, explained that a composed cue had been substituted for the recording of the Rhine falls, because the loudspeaker had been unable to reproduce all the low frequencies of the field recording (Brodmerkel 1953: 244; cited in Goergen 1989: 32).

From his own published views on sound film, there is no doubt that Meisel was excited about the prospects of sound film, its practical and artistic potential:

[Sound film] will guarantee that the same first-class reproduction [of film music] will be heard even in the smallest place as in the first-run cinema of the capital city. . . .

It will be of the greatest importance for the total development of film to capture now not only the sight but also the hearing of the public through the logical interleaving of film and music, whereupon the considerable psychological effects of music will be able to play a big role. (Meisel 1928-08-26)

Above all, the sound film must be prepared not according to a scenario but according to a score. However this score must not consist of notes, but of images, captions, sounds, music, spoken and perhaps sung text, the selection and contrapuntal combination of which then produces the film action according to the particular subject. (Meisel 1928-09-13)

[S]ound film must comprise a counterpoint of image, word, sound, and music. The aesthetically flawless artistic form must be produced through the detailed dovetailing of all these factors. First and foremost it is necessary on such aesthetic grounds to co-ordinate these four different elements . . . (Der Film 1928-09-15)

Ruttman expressed similar thoughts:

It must be made clear from the outset that the laws [of sound film] have almost nothing to do with the laws of soundless film. There is a completely new situation here. The photographed moving image is coupled with photographed sound. The entire artistic mystery of sound film consists in creating the coupling of these two photographed elements in such a way that a new thing results, namely the activity which arises from the opposition between image and sound. Counterpoint – optical-acoustic counterpoint – must be the basis for all sound film design. The struggle between image and sound, how they interact, how at times they blend together then detach themselves again, in order to operate against each other afresh – these are the possibilities.

(Ruttman 1928-09-01; reproduced in Goergen 1989: 83)

The use of the term ‘counterpoint’ by Ruttman and Meisel raises obvious parallels with Eisenstein’s sound manifesto. Before ‘talkies’ had even taken hold in the USA, the manifesto foretold that sound films would be photographic representations of

theatrical art and that, as a result, the artistic development of film would take a backward step. The solution to this problem, based entirely on theory rather than practical experience of sound film, was to aim for a contrapuntal use of sound. This sound manifesto was translated in the German press (Eisenstein *et al.* 1928-07-28; reproduced in Schlegel 1984: 166–9) a few weeks before the statements made by Ruttmann and Meisel were published, at a time when shooting for *Deutscher Rundfunk* was still underway. Goergen (1989: 33) has suggested that these parallels are coincidental and that Ruttmann and Meisel arrived at their sound-film ideas independently. Ruttmann had still not met any of the Russian directors (Goergen 1989: 51, n 39), but, since ‘Russian montage’ was one of the most exciting (and fashionable) tools for filmmakers and other artists in the 1920s, it is possible that he applied the principle to sound film himself. Meisel already had a good grounding in visual montage through his work on *Potemkin* and *October*: there is no evidence that Eisenstein had communicated any of his ideas on audio-visual counterpoint to the composer prior to the publication of the manifesto.

Goergen (1989: 33) also proposed that *Deutscher Rundfunk/Tönende Welle* was the first sound film to show the beginnings of the ‘orchestral counterpoint of visual and sound images’ called for by the Russians, but this is questionable. During a trip to Berlin in November 1928, Pudovkin met Ruttmann and saw *Deutscher Rundfunk* – his first experience of sound film – and was impressed with the reproduction of the animal sounds and machine noises (Goergen 1989: 33). A few months later when visiting London and still yet to make a sound film himself, Pudovkin issued a statement to the press regarding the future of sound film, which included his famous remark – possibly inspired by hearing the animals in *Deutscher Rundfunk* – that one might ‘combine the fury of a man with the roar of a lion’ (*Cinema News and Property Gazette* 1929-02-06). There is no evidence from the reviews that any of the individual film clips in *Deutscher Rundfunk* combined sound and image in a contrapuntal manner, similar to Pudovkin’s man–lion combination;

instead the reviews concentrate on the quality and naturalness of the recorded sounds, praising, for instance, the absolute synchrony between sound and image in reproduction (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1928-09-01).

Just as Parisians had been startled and fascinated by images of a train approaching a station when the Lumière brothers first showed their films in the late 1890s, so sound film was still in its novelty stage. Hence the audiences at *Deutscher Rundfunk* were fascinated to see sealions and hear them making the expected noise. Goergen's proposition that *Deutscher Rundfunk* embodied the principles of the Soviet sound manifesto is therefore unlikely. True, the soundtrack was a montage of field recordings, music and (musically) composed sound effects, but one which still relied primarily on 'hearing what was seen'. The success of *Deutscher Rundfunk* soon led to another advertising film for Bagier and Ruttmann: *Melodie der Welt* (*Melody of the World*), this time commissioned by the Hamburg-America shipping line (Hapag). This film is considered to be the first full-length German sound film (Klaus 1988: 127), and, unlike *Berlin* or *Deutscher Rundfunk*, was partially demonstrated at a Baden-Baden festival in 1929 (Goergen 1989: 126). Meisel, however, was not invited to write the score. Instead, the commission went to Zeller. This would have been a double-blow to Meisel, because it also put an end to sound-film proposals he was planning with Ruttmann (see Appendix IV). Amidst this uncertain background, Meisel was thrown an unexpected lifeline: the opportunity of a foreign engagement (Edmund and Els Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 13 October 1928).

10 Meisel in England

Meisel and his wife left Berlin on 1 November 1928, bound for London to record ‘a new large-scale sound film with a newly established English sound-film company’ (Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 31 October 1928). At that point, Meisel had no inkling how long this work would last, or that he would be in London for more than a year. Hollywood’s multinational corporations had already begun to export sound movies into Great Britain, wiring the deluxe cinemas in the major cities to screen the most popular talking films:

In London, Warners had leased the Piccadilly Theatre to play Vitaphone. THE JAZZ SINGER premiered on 27 September 1928 . . . [and] was followed by THE TERROR (1928) . . . THE SINGING FOOL opened at the Regal in the West End and was well received. But the initial talking-picture wave in Britain failed to produce the excitement that had marked the American reception. In January 1929, there still were only eleven Western Electric houses in the British Isles.

(Crafton 1999: 419)

Meisel’s letters to Eisenstein from London reveal his concern over how far the German film industry was lagging behind in comparison to the rapidly improving American sound films on show in London. The facts related in his letters seem reliable and up to date when compared with the latest news in the British trade journals.

For at least some of his time in London, Meisel lived in St. James’s Chambers, Ryder Street, SW1, close to all the major London cinemas and Wardour Street, where many of the film production companies had their offices (J. M. Harvey to Meisel, London, 8 November 1929; FS15.5.33). Despite his reputation in Germany, Meisel was generally unknown in London. *Potemkin* and *October* had yet to be screened to the general public in Britain, with or without Meisel’s scores, but *Berlin* had been shown by the Film Society at the New Gallery Kinema on 4 March 1928, with

Meisel's score conducted by Ernest Grimshaw (The Film Society 1972: 85–8).

Meisel soon became involved with the Film Society and, in particular, Montagu, as well as several film critics and writers, including Blakeston, Hay Chowl and Herring. These film critics reported Meisel's work in the avant-garde journal *Close Up*; Herring also mentioned him in his reviews for the *Manchester Guardian*, under the initials R. H. There are no surviving records showing Film Society membership details; if Meisel was not a member during his stay in England, he was at least an invited guest on a number of occasions.

Whatever work enticed Meisel to London did not prove to be as substantial as he had anticipated, and the studios in which he had expected to operate were not yet finished (R. H. 1929-02-16). The first reports of his activities appeared in January 1929. A German press announcement reaffirmed that Meisel had been 'called to London to take over the musical direction of a newly founded sound-film studio' and reported that he had completed two short sound-films: "'John Riley'", after an old English ballad, and "'The Drunken Sailor'". The first approaches an ancient form in its use of the Chorus, but is a modern short opera. The second is a grotesque' (*Film-Kurier* 1929-01-15). From a later report in the *Manchester Guardian*, it is apparent that Meisel had written the scripts and made some preliminary sound recordings, at least for *John Riley*:

[Meisel] has had time to write the music and scripts of two films on English songs. One of these is 'John Riley', and part of his composition he played to me. . . . By the score there was a plan for the arrangement of the orchestra before the microphone. Herr Meisel explained this to me, saying that there are many problems. The singers must be close to the microphone; he puts them to one side, with the conductor on the other side. In front come the violins, then behind them, but elevated, come the 'cellos. . . . It is one of [Meisel's] theories that two microphones should be used. It was naturally objected that one was sufficient. Tests were made, first with one, then with two. The composer was vindicated. . . . Herr Meisel convinces you that here is a man who has really studied the principles of sound-films . . .

(R. H. 1929-02-16)

It is not known exactly where Meisel carried out these sound recordings. These films do not seem to have been ‘complete’ in the sense that they were distributed and screened to the public, but appear to have been vehicles for testing the viability of various sound-recording methods and a means of self-promotion to generate income. Bruce Woolfe, a film producer with British Instructional Films, apparently promised Meisel some sound-film work in January 1929, but this failed to materialize, due to a lack of the necessary equipment (Meisel to Eisenstein, London, 31 August 1929).

There are a few reports of Meisel’s activities in February 1929, none of which would have earned him much money, if any. *Berlin* was screened at the Avenue Pavilion, London, in February 1929. Prior to the run, Meisel attended a late night screening and played through the score for the benefit of the resident organist (Onlooker 1929-02-04; cf. Chow 1929-03). Meisel’s first known involvement with the Film Society also occurred in February: the composer is mentioned in the programme for 3 February 1929 as having collaborated with the conductor Ernest Grimshaw over the musical accompaniment for the main feature, Pudovkin’s *End of St Petersburg* (The Film Society 1972: 114). Pudovkin attended the performance and gave a lecture in which he shared his thoughts on the future of sound film, acting, and how he had studied montage technique with Lev Kuleshov. Pudovkin’s lecture, reproduced a few days later in *Cinema News*, had a huge impact on many of those working in the fledgling British sound-film industry (Hitchcock, for example) and on Meisel’s own sound-film ideas. Having worked with Eisenstein, Pudovkin’s ideas were not entirely new to Meisel, but the composer can only have been encouraged in his convictions when he heard Pudovkin say:

I visualise a film in which sounds and human speech are wedded to the visual images on the screen in the same way as that in which two or more melodies can be combined by an orchestra. The sound will correspond to the film in the same way as the orchestra corresponds to the film to-day.

The only difference from the method of to-day is that the director will have the control of the sound in his own hands; it will not be in the hands of the conductor of the orchestra.

The wealth of those sounds will be overwhelming. All the sounds of the whole world, beginning with the whisper of a man or the cry of a child and rising to the roar of an explosion. The expressionism of a film can reach unthought-of heights.

It can combine the fury of a man with the roar of a lion. The language of the cinema will achieve the power of the language of literature.

(Cinema News and Property Gazette 1929-02-06)

Shortly after Pudovkin's lecture, it was announced that Meisel

has just completed a sound-scenario, probably the first of its type ever written, called 'A Symphony of London'

[He] has some remarkable ideas on the blending of sound with film into a comprehensive whole, which will be quoted and discussed in the next CINEMA Supplement.

(Cinema News and Property Gazette 1929-02-21)

This scenario, also known as 'London Symphony', was Meisel's personal project, of which few details survive. It can be fairly safely assumed that he wanted to replicate and expand upon the success of Ruttman's *Berlin*, but this time with recorded sound. As promised, Meisel's theories on music in film appeared in a lengthy article, which begins:

It has been frequently suggested that the future of cinema music is in the direction of specially composed scores for the bigger films, but Edmund Meisel, the composer and creator of the music for 'Berlin' and 'Potemkin', carries the idea much farther, and is enthusiastic over a theory which is almost revolutionary in its daring.

His theory is that film and music must be wedded into a completely new form of expression—that, viewed from one angle, the two together must be regarded as a medium for a new type of symphony, in which vision can be accounted practically as another instrument in the orchestra.

This daring conception does not imply the subjugation of the screen to the music, but it insists on equal importance between the two media of expression. It is a mistake, insists Herr Meisel, to make a picture and then to fit music to it. The musician should be engaged from the beginning, and should

have a voice in the scenario, in order that the art he represents should have a fair chance of adding something of importance to the finished entertainment.

(*Cinema News and Property Gazette* 1929-03-06)

The term ‘wedded’ in the second statement also appeared in Pudovkin’s lecture, and was perhaps a deliberate reference on the part of the composer or journalist. Meisel also showed his awareness of recreating auditory perspective, advocating that composers should study the microphone and the principles of recording, since in his own experiments he had found it necessary to annotate his scores with

a detailed description of the position to be occupied by the different instruments of the orchestra in relation to the microphones. Solos must be marked ‘direct’ or ‘remote’ in reference to the microphone, and it might be necessary for the musicians to stand at any given moment to obtain a special effect, or even to shift their position during the playing.

(*Cinema News and Property Gazette* 1929-03-06)

Meisel failed to find financial backing for his ‘London Symphony’ and was on the point of returning to Berlin when he received a contract from British Talking Pictures (BTP) to post-synchronize four unnamed films (Meisel to Eisenstein, London, 18 April 1929). A later press release detailed his responsibilities: ‘At the invitation of B.I.F.D.,¹ Mr. Edmund Meisel, the eminent [Austrian] composer and conductor, is writing original musical compositions, synchronisation and sound effects to the company’s films’ and named the first production as *The Crimson Circle* (*Bioscope* 1929-07-24). Apart from the dialogue, Meisel was therefore in charge of designing and fitting together virtually the entire soundtrack.²

¹ British International Film Distributors, parent company to British Talking Pictures.

² Some of the ensuing discussion formed part of my paper entitled ‘Another mystery from the pen of Mr Edgar Wallace? The case of the vanishing part-talkie, *The Crimson Circle* (British Talking Pictures, 1929)’, given at a conference entitled *The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain: Textual, Material and Technological Sources* at Stewart House, University of London, and The Barbican Centre, 7–9 June 2009. This paper has subsequently been revised and will appear in the forthcoming conference proceedings, tentatively titled *The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain*, edited by Julie Brown and Annette Davison, and scheduled to be published by Oxford University Press, Inc., in 2012.

The Crimson Circle

British Talking Pictures was part of a film business portfolio owned by Isidore W. Schlesinger, an American magnate with a virtual monopoly over the distribution and exhibition of films in South Africa. Schlesinger began to invest in the British film industry in 1926, joining the board of British International Pictures to guarantee him a supply of the best British films to screen in Africa (Gutsche 1972: 179). Within two years he had taken over Lee de Forest's Phonofilms (a sound-on-film system) at Wembley and had formed three interrelated companies to handle equipment sales and studio hire, sound-film production, and film rentals. These were, respectively: British Talking Pictures, British Sound Film Productions, and British International Film Distributors (Low 1997 [1985]: 182–3). By the time Meisel arrived in London, British Talking Pictures had a soundproof studio at Wembley capable of producing short sound-films, with additional facilities for post-synchronizing silent pictures; larger studio premises for producing feature-length sound films were completed in September 1929 (*Bioscope British Film Number Special Issue* 1928-12-31; Eveleigh 1929-09-04).

Early in 1929, Schlesinger's distribution company acquired the rights to Friedrich Zelnik's latest German silent film, *Der rote Kreis* (Fraenkel 1929-01-30). The plot was based on Edgar Wallace's thriller *The Crimson Circle* (London, 1922), in which a mysterious stranger controls a murderous blackmail gang in London. The gang is pursued by Inspector Parr and a private detective, Derrick Yale (Stewart Rome). Parr's daughter, Thalia Drummond (Lya Mara), working undercover as a mysterious secretary-cum-petty thief, helps her father to unmask Yale as the criminal mastermind. *Der rote Kreis*, retitled as *The Crimson Circle*, had its London trade show on 1 March 1929 (*Bioscope* 1929-02-27) and was described as having 'little to distinguish it from other detective stories . . . [but] should please not too exacting audiences' (*Bioscope* 1929-03-06b). Nonetheless, BIFD selected the film as a

suitable vehicle for adding sound and it was re-released in August 1929 with dialogue, effects and a score post-synchronized on discs using British Talking Pictures equipment. Neither the print nor the discs are known to be extant, but glimpses of Meisel's intentions and style can be gleaned from contemporaneous press reports and articles. These include two reviews in *Close Up*, one anonymous (*Close Up* 1929-10) and one by Chowl (1929-10), which, despite their disparaging comments about the film content and Meisel's score, are particularly valuable sources. Another vital source is Meisel's own account of his sound-film experiences in London, published nearly a year later in *Melos*, entitled 'Experiences with musical work in sound film' (Meisel 1930-07). The information in these reports, when set within the wider context of Meisel's other surviving scores and soundtracks from the period 1926–30, suggests ways in which the soundtrack for *The Crimson Circle* may have been designed and may have sounded. Meisel's scores for films with the most traditional narrative elements, namely *Der heilige Berg* (discussed above in Chapter 6) and *Der blaue Expreß* (discussed in Chapter 13), are particularly relevant.

At the time in both England and America, a variety of sound-recording methods were in use of either the sound-on-disc or sound-on-film types. The British publication *Kinematograph Year Book* (1930: 261–5) lists twenty different systems with varying installation prices, five of which were disc only and the rest having apparatus for sound-on-film and disc. The list begins with the three market-leaders in Britain: Western Electric, RCA Photophone and BTP, all promoting sound-on-film systems. The success of the Vitaphone disc system used in *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) initially encouraged many theatres in America and Europe to have similar systems installed. As a consequence, companies such as BTP, although chiefly the producers of sound-on-film equipment, developed a sound-on-disc attachment so that a greater variety of sound films could be screened on their equipment (Barber 1929-02-06). Opinions were divided regarding the long-term future of sound-on-disc systems, since the majority felt that sound-on-film was the

future. However, sound-on-film was still in a relatively experimental stage, whereas disc recording and reproduction were more established and, for a while, provided better sound definition and volume. Sound discs had some specific disadvantages, namely that they were ‘more trouble to transport and almost impossible on location, gave bad surface noise after wear, were more difficult to synchronize and made it harder to deal with accidental breaks or cuts in the film and incidentally more difficult for the censors’ (Low 1971: 206). British sound films from the 1920s have not survived well and sound-on-disc films have fared even worse than their sound-on-film counterparts, because the special sound discs perished easily, were vandalized or became separated from their corresponding film reels.

Many of the early sound features released by American studios in 1928 were silent films ‘retrofitted with music, sound effects, and perhaps a little post-dubbed dialogue . . . The skeptical press disparagingly referred to these as “goat glands”’ (Crafton 1999: 168). Advertisements for the sound version of *The Crimson Circle* promote precisely these features: ‘Dialogue! Synchronized! Sound Effects!’ (*Cinema News and Property Gazette* 1929-08-26), suggesting that *The Crimson Circle* should also be classified as a ‘goat gland’ talkie. Sinclair Hill, formerly a director at Stoll Picture Productions (*Bioscope* 1929-03-06a), directed the talking sequences. These were concentrated in the beginning, middle and end of the drama:

The dialogue is introduced in the early scenes when the Scotland Yard detective and the bogus detective [Yale] discuss plans for tracking down the mysterious gang, during the frantic rush of people at the run on the bank, and again in the finale when the real culprit is dramatically exposed. The recording of the voices is extremely good, those of Stewart Rome and Lya Mara being particularly so.

(*Bioscope* 1929-08-28)

This suggests that Hill went to some lengths to integrate the new dialogue within the drama, rather than merely bolting on a reel of dialogue at the end as an additional flourish, as was often the case (Crafton 1999: 13). The English actor Stewart Rome was definitely involved in the new sound version (*Cinema News and Property*

Gazette 1929-06-12), but there was speculation in the press regarding the voice of his Latvian co-star: ‘Considering the difficulties of synchronising certain of the scenes, Mr. Sinclair Hill has acquitted himself admirably. . . . That we have been unable to discover whether Lya Mara had a speaking double or not is a great tribute to the director’ (L. H. C. 1929-08-28).

Meisel may have received the princely sum of £1000 for his work on *The Crimson Circle*. This can be inferred from a cost estimate for Meisel’s proposed post-synchronization of Eisenstein’s *The General Line* (IM118), discussed below, prepared by Montagu in the autumn of 1929. Meisel contributed some of the figures for this estimate, such as the cost of preparing the music and hiring the orchestra. He proposed using an orchestra of twenty-five men, similar in size to that used in *The Crimson Circle* (see below), and suggested a remuneration of £500 for composition, conducting and rights. This was ‘half his normal fee from B.I.F.D. for the same work’. Meisel’s more secure financial situation enabled him to install a projector in his London flat (Onlooker 1929-06-11), recreating the working conditions he had enjoyed in Berlin for *Potemkin*. This allowed him to compose at a piano whilst watching the film print.

Rehearsals for the synchronization began in mid-June, but were interrupted by a strike over remuneration rates. This strike was fortunate for posterity: without press reports of the industrial action it is unlikely that any details of the recording sessions would have survived. The press reports in *Bioscope*, *Cinema News* and *The Times* between 20 and 26 June 1929 are summarized below; full details of the reports are available in the Bibliography. Twenty-six musicians had been employed through an agent at a rate of 2½ and 2 guineas per working day (from 9am to 5pm) for first and second instrumentalists respectively. The musicians were happy with this rate of remuneration, as it was additional income at a greater rate than their regular theatre work in the evenings. On 18 June, the fourth day of rehearsals, officials from the Musicians Union went to the Wembley Studios and instructed the musicians to strike

for Union rates of £4 and £3 (for first and second instruments) per three-hour session. Although BTP agreed to employ the musicians directly at the considerably higher Union rates once work restarted, the Union also demanded that BTP pay arrears for the first four days of rehearsal. BTP refused and the musicians were called out on strike. The allegedly reluctant strikers were criticized by the press for demanding extra pay for day-time work, when many were also being paid for evening-work in theatres. The musicians were soon replaced and the recording sessions recommenced. A later press release stressed that all musicians hired were British (*Bioscope* 1929-07-24), as sufficient British personnel and studio facilities had to be employed to guarantee that, despite its German origins and international cast, the sound version of *The Crimson Circle* qualified as ‘British-made’ under the terms of the Cinematograph Films Act 1927.

We can deduce from the lengthy rehearsal time that Meisel’s score required many detailed points of synchrony during the live recording. It is perhaps surprising that the sound was recorded on to discs, given that BTP chiefly employed a sound-on-film process. The decision may have been taken to promote the new BTP disc attachment – advertised around the time *The Crimson Circle* was being recorded (*Bioscope* 1929-06-26a) – or to take into account the existing number of cinemas with sound-on-disc equipment. Alternatively, Meisel may have insisted on using disc technology, due to his previous recording experience in Berlin. Press releases published prior to the trade shows for *The Crimson Circle* promote Meisel’s score as the film’s unique selling point, particularly its construction along ‘operatic lines’ and how it closely reflected the action:

[This is] the first ‘talkie’ film to have music composed for it on definitely operatic lines. . . .

Mr. Edmund Meisel, who has composed the music in three months, makes some of the instruments ‘talk’ in exact accompaniment to certain of the words the characters utter. In addition to giving every character his or her

motive, and modifying these themes to suit each part of the action, the music is composed to suggest in turn colour, light, words, effects and impressions.

(*Cinema News and Property Gazette* 1929-08-13)

[Meisel] has given not only each character a motif, but each theme of the film – the circle, the letter, the Buddha, &c. – a motif as well; so that there will be a harmony of texture in the sound, as there is a harmony of texture in the images. . . . The trade mark of B.I.F.D. has even a motif to itself. (R. H. 1929-08-17)

The music . . . will express dialogue, colour, emotion, mystery and dancing.

Through Meisel's musical interpretation, people will be seen and 'heard' running. A man calling 'Thalia' will be heard in music. When a prison door opens, a cell becomes lighter and lighter. The change is expressed by sound.

(*Bioscope* 1929-08-21)

One reporter had already heard selections from Meisel's score, played by the composer whilst the film was projected, and described how the music 'is absolutely modern, and I'm wondering how the general public will take it. So far as I could see, it fits the picture like a glove – every action, almost every word is accompanied by just the right turn of phrase in the musical score' (Onlooker 1929-08-14). As previously discussed, this proclivity to tailor his music closely to the action through accompanied dialogue, leitmotifs and sound effects is central to Meisel's style, but is most pronounced in *Der heilige Berg*, the film with the most archetypal narrative.

Accompanied dialogue

There are many sequences in *Der heilige Berg* (1926) where Meisel used speech patterns in the intertitles (or silently mouthed by the actors) to generate declamatory melodic material, sometimes exactly replicating the number of syllables. Meisel was still advocating the same approach to accompanying silent-film dialogue in 1929, in an interview given primarily to promote his 'Symphony of London' scenario:

Instruments should, on occasion, 'speak' the subtitles – that is to say, they should accompany the sentence, with proper intonation for a question, or an

exclamation, and the dramatic effect of certain subtitles can be much enhanced by this means. (Cinema News and Property Gazette 1929-03-06)

Moreover, Meisel would return to this technique for his final score, *Der blaue Express*, particularly for the scene near the beginning of the film, where the Chinese railway fireman is overjoyed to be reunited with two of his family members (see Chapter 13). Meisel similarly accompanied spoken dialogue (and potentially some still rendered via intertitles) in *The Crimson Circle*. The notion of Meisel making instrumental melodies shadow the contours of actual dialogue in a sound film seems at best bold and experimental or at worst foolhardy, especially at a time when it was all too easy to drown the voice with any simultaneously recorded sounds. Meisel described four different ways in which he experimented with dialogue accompaniment in *The Crimson Circle*, varying orchestration and microphone positioning to overcome this danger:

In daily co-operation with the sound technicians I tried out all possible combinations.

For example: repeatedly recording the same piece in various orchestrations, moreover modifying the positions of the instruments around the microphone – dialogue recordings accompanied throughout with music, or only the gaps in conversations filled with music, or individual words emphasized with music. . . . The performance of individual instruments as an accompaniment to the appropriate personalities in the dialogue . . .

(Meisel 1930-07: 313)

Examples representing each type of accompaniment can be found in press reports. The climax of *The Crimson Circle* was praised for the effective manner ‘in which music and voices are dramatically blended’ (L. H. C. 1929-08-28), a concrete example where dialogue had a continuous accompaniment. Meisel would create similar blends for crowd scenes in his post-synchronization of *Potemkin* in 1930 (see Chapter 12). A *Close Up* review cited an example where Meisel filled in the gap after a shout:

Yale leaves Parr and an assistant, and enters the next room. We hear him fall heavily. Parr rushes to the locked door and shouts ‘Yale!!’ Swifter than an echo a ‘composed’ shout follows . . . (Chowl 1929-10: 297)

This example is directly comparable to a moment in Steiner’s score to *The Informer*, where a solo violin echoes the vocal pitch intonation after the main character’s girlfriend calls out his name, ‘Gypo!’ (Neumeyer 1995: 82). Emphasizing an individual word – particularly a name – was not a new idea for Meisel: there are several examples in his *Der heilige Berg* score where one character calls out the name of another. There is at least one more example of it in *The Crimson Circle*: a press release stated that ‘A man calling “Thalia” will be heard in music’ (*Bioscope* 1929-08-21). It is possible that the ‘Thalia’ shout immediately shadowed the recorded voice, as in the ‘Yale!!’ example, rather than being heard simultaneously. Finally, there is a description of a scene from *The Crimson Circle* where Meisel chose instrumentation appropriate to character and situation in a manner similar to the first encounter between Diotima and the mountain climber in *Der heilige Berg* (see Figure 6.7, above):

[A]n old misanthropist irately approaches his young secretary . . . to angry, clipped figurations from a *forte*, muted, solo trombone. The tentative reply of the intimidated young girl . . . *piano legato* solo oboe. The ranting fury of the old man . . . screeching muted gabbling of the trombone, turning *diminuendo* into the clattering of the typewriter, to where the young girl with tiny *pizzicato* footsteps has taken refuge. (Meisel 1930-07: 313)

Leitmotifs

Audiences at the trade presentations were handed publicity material which stated how every character and salient detail had a distinctive motif in Meisel’s score, each rendered by means of appropriate instrumentation, and that sometimes these motifs would be contrapuntally intertwined in accordance with the dramatic conditions (Chowl 1929-10: 296; *Close Up* 1929-10: 341). As demonstrated in the analysis of

Der heilige Berg, Meisel's handling of leitmotifs can be described as apposite but unsophisticated: his themes were hardly ever transformed or combined. *The Crimson Circle* appears to have had more examples of themes in combination, but trade-show reviews imply that Meisel's thematic approach was still crude and at times overdone:

The film opened with a scene of detective Yale in his study . . . The 'Yale' motif is heard, strange, expectant; rather like a gramophone running at the wrong speed. Inspector Parr is announced. 'Parr' motif, then 'Parr' and 'Yale' motifs interwoven in conversational undertones, but . . . in the strange timbre of a gramophone turning too fast. (Chowl 1929-10: 296-7)

When a gold Chinese Buddha is being sold to a pawnbroker the ear is filled with music which suggests the stately march of mandarins in some musical comedy while the mind is wholly indifferent to the object which is being bartered; the meaning of the scene to us is that in it an apparently innocent typist is shown to be a thief. (*The Times* 1929-08-28)

In the second citation, above, Meisel's response appears to be no different from the archetypal pianist accompanying a silent film: he saw a Chinese Buddha and immediately produced some stereotypical Chinese music, just as he would for the various social classes of Chinese in *Der blaue Expresß*.

Sound effects

Meisel described some of the sound effects during the scene between the old misanthropist and his young secretary:

Cumbersomely the old man gets up, in order to go after her . . . a deep sound accompanies each of his movements: sitting . . . first sound. Gazing at the girl, his arm lying on the table . . . second sound. Standing up . . . third sound. Beating the table with his fist . . . fourth sound, – the sounds continually intensifying! Sound montage in synchronization with the image . . . (Meisel 1930-07: 313)

The fear engendered in the young girl as the old man rises menacingly from the table may have been accompanied by Meisel's trademark ascending sequence from *Potemkin*, where a simple rhythmic idea is repeated at successive chromatic steps as

the action intensifies. An ascending sequence may also have been appropriated for what Meisel described as ‘A colour-music experiment: for a prison cell scene, in which through the gradual opening of the door more and more light enters, the music becomes increasingly brighter exactly in the rhythm of the opening door’ (Meisel 1930-07: 313). Throughout his career, Meisel had shown a preference for sound effects to be composed within the score and instigated by the conductor’s baton. Again, this is evident from his earlier interview in *Cinema News*:

In the interpretation of scenes into music [Meisel] introduces a number of distinctive ideas.

One is, the elimination of ‘effects’ as such, in deference to music that suggests the sound to be indicated. Telephone bells, for instance, should not be ‘rung’ in the ordinary way, but should be worked in as an integral part of the music. (Cinema News and Property Gazette 1929-03-06)

Chowl was surprised and disappointed that Meisel, whom he described as ‘the mid-European pioneer of counterpoint sound and sight’ had resorted to such synchronized mimetic sound effects, seemingly eschewing the recent ‘Statement of Sound’ issued by Meisel’s Russian friends (Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Pudovkin):

When someone is seen typing and tapping noises are heard, whether it is the typewriter itself or ‘composed’ tappings that are heard; substantially, it is *hearing* what is *seen*. And that, I understand, is taboo in the best counterpoint circles. (Chowl 1929-10: 296 and 297)

This early critique anticipates the later derision of mickey-mousing techniques in American feature-film scores during the early sound era (see Chapter 2). Disney’s sound shorts were immediately popular in America and London with everybody from the cinema-going public to the writers of *Close Up*. Although they were being screened in London whilst Meisel was still in residence, he makes no mention of the Mickey Mouse cartoons in his letters to Eisenstein. Meisel had arrived at his sound ideas independently, as is apparent from his interview in *Cinema News* (1929-03-06). Like Disney’s first composers – chiefly Wilfred Jackson and Carl Stalling – Meisel

created a close choreography of movements and sound effects in his scores, drawing on age-old musical rhetorical figures for expressive effect. Yet sometimes he achieved this in novel ways, ‘trying out rarely used combinations of instruments (e.g. harpsichord, vibraphone) for sound effects’ (Meisel 1930-07: 313). Ultimately, there was an infectious quality to Meisel’s ‘visual sound’:

We should remember how Mara [Thalia Drummond] comes into a room and sits down to read a letter, all to the tune of a highly rhythmised tango. That was worth a lot when you consider Mara – which Meisel helps you to do – in this light. He Meisels her into your subconscious. Nothing else could. Remember too the typewriter’s cute tappetytap, and specially a harpsichordish *con brio* tinkling round the somberer noises of a business interview.

(*Close Up* 1929-10: 341)

Trade presentations

The Secretary to the Film Society sent out an open invitation on Meisel’s behalf, asking members to attend the London trade show:

Mr. Edmund Meisel has invited the members of the Film Society to be present at the first showing of the film for which he has recently composed the music – “The Crimson Circle” – to be shown at the New Gallery Kinema at 11:00am on Tuesday, August 27th. . . .

Mr. Meisel has developed the theory that the sound accompaniment to a picture should be composed of musical impulses arranged so as to correspond exactly with a movement on the screen . . . and as he has himself discussed his theory at meetings of the Society, he states that he would be glad of the opinion of members upon his most recent work – the first adoption of this principle to a synchronised film.

(J. M. Harvey, to Film Society members, London, 21 August 1929, FS15.5.33)

This invitation is evidence that Meisel, if not in the official capacity as invited speaker, did air his sound-film ideas at the Film Society. Around this time, Meisel also suggested that the Film Society should screen *Deutscher Rundfunk/Tönende Welle*. Montagu contacted Bagier in Berlin, requesting the possibility of having the print transferred onto a sound-film system which could be shown in London (Montagu to Bagier, London, 22 August 1929; FS19), but nothing came of it.

An entry programme from the London trade show (JA19) contains the opening of a press release for *The Crimson Circle* (Bioscope 1929-07-24), a boxed caption containing adulatory comments about Meisel (taken from R. H. 1929-02-16), and the full programme of entertainments. The show began with two BIFD shorts: ‘A Musical Novelty’, starring the English actress Flora le Breton, and *Dimples and Tears*, a musical burlesque of Al Jolson singing ‘Sonny Boy’ performed by marionettes.³ Further trade presentations were given in Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow and Cardiff between 30 August and 11 September 1929 (*Cinema News and Property Gazette* 1929-08-28; also 1929-09-04). There were complaints regarding the over-amplification of the sound at the trade shows (*Bioscope* 1929-08-28), a problem common in many cinemas newly equipped for sound reproduction. However, much of the over-amplification during *The Crimson Circle* was intentional, if perhaps overdone in practice, since ‘cue-sheets giving the right volume for each scene’ were used at the trade shows (R. H. 1929-08-31). This meant that, in addition to synchronizing each sound disc with its matching film reel, an operator regularly had to adjust the volume during the screening to create a greater dynamic range in reproduction than was possible during the recording. Hence ‘a saxophone had a sound close-up, and one man’s voice was amplified until it expressed a whole crowd’ (R. H. 1929-08-31).

A few days after the London trade show, Meisel wrote enthusiastically about the future of sound film to Eisenstein:

I have just shown enormously great possibilities here through an experiment, with great success. Dialogue with instruments, composed car chases, close-ups with instruments, etc. The artistic creation of any noise is possible . . .

Already in the case of my film the press here are writing that my way is the correct one and worthy of imitation.

(Meisel to Eisenstein, London, August 31, 1929)

³ The latter survives as the second item, ‘Jan Olson in Dimples and Tears’ in the seven-minute film *Gorno’s Italian Marionettes* (BSFP [Phonofilm], GB 1929), screened at the British Silent Film and Pordenone Film Festivals 2009, in a programme devised and presented by Tony Fletcher and John Sweeney.

The Crimson Circle was not the unmitigated success implied by Meisel's comments. Because of the emphasis in the press releases on the 'operatic' nature of his score, many critics had been inadvertently primed to expect that Meisel's music would be considered too highbrow for commercial cinema. Consequently, the *Kinematograph Weekly* (1929-08-29) found it 'a little too advanced in technique to appeal to the masses. The discordant noises, instead of creating atmosphere, only succeed in taking one's mind off the picture'. By contrast, the *Cinema* reviewer was pleasantly surprised:

We state frankly that [Meisel's score] is not as bizarre from the popular point of view as we had thought conceivable, but is actually a score which even the most unintelligent film patron can appreciate. It is certainly something different, although in his desire to interpret the actions of the players Herr Meisel occasionally attracts relatively too much attention to his music. It is, nevertheless, consistently interesting. (L. H. C. 1929-08-28)

Those critics who were more familiar with Meisel's other scores – typically the Film Society cognoscenti – questioned why Meisel's talents had been wasted on an Edgar Wallace plot in the first place (for example R. H. 1929-08-31; *Close Up* 1929-10: 341). It is not known how many bookings for *The Crimson Circle* were generated as a result of the trade shows and I have yet to find any listings for it, even in London. Presumably Schlesinger's chain of eighteen cinemas – United Picture Theatres – was obliged to screen it. The film had a short run in the Little Picture House, New York, but was criticized for having a 'poorly synchronized score . . . sounding very much like romantic Oriental music trying to go modern' (*New York Times* 1929-12-28).

Meisel was not involved in *Dark Red Roses*, the next major BIFD release. This was their first full-talking feature, a psychological thriller in which a sculptor's wife falls in love with a musician. Once again it was directed by Sinclair Hill and starred Stewart Rome, but the theme song and (mostly diegetic) musical interludes were furnished by BTP's music director, the English composer Philip Braham, formerly a composer for theatrical revues and musical comedies (*Bioscope* 1929-08-14). *Dark*

Red Roses had a successful trade show on 16 October, just days before a serious fire at the Wembley studios in the early hours of Sunday 20 October (*The Times* 1929-10-21). Miraculously, their newest sound studio for recording feature-length films emerged relatively unscathed, as did their main film vault. The *Bioscope* (1929-10-23) reported that *Dark Red Roses* had been saved, but made no mention of *The Crimson Circle*: it had already been forgotten.

There is no evidence to suggest that Meisel completed the remaining three, unnamed, films of his British Talking Pictures contract. It may have been due in part to the mixed reception of *The Crimson Circle*, but there were also many changes occurring at the Wembley studios during the latter half of 1929. Firstly BTP announced an amalgamation with the German Tobis and Klangfilm companies (*Bioscope* 1929-07-03), which generated rumours in the press about possible job losses at Wembley (*Bioscope* 1929-10-09). Despite the tragic fire at Wembley studios in October, Schlesinger announced even more ambitious plans the following month to form a new European sound-film company, Associated Sound Film Industries (merging BTP, Tobis-Klangfilm and the Dutch concern Kuchenmeister), to compete directly with the American sound-film companies (*Bioscope* 1929-11-06). The establishment of this new company was partly a pre-emptive strike due to patent infringement suits issued against BTP and Klangfilm by Western Electric. Ultimately, costly multi-national and multi-lingual productions, which generated disappointing box-office returns, accelerated financial ruin for Schlesinger's enterprises (Warren 1995: 183). British Talking Pictures was rescued from liquidation (*The Times* 1930-03-27) and struggled on for a few more years, trading at a reasonable profit but never able to recover from its long-standing debts. As for Wembley studios, whose future looked so promising when Meisel was first in London, it ended up being leased out to independent producers, becoming a busy production centre for Fox-British quota films in the 1930s (Warren 1995: 183).

The lacklustre reception of *The Crimson Circle* and Meisel's other failed ventures in England would undoubtedly have contributed to London's opinion that 'apparently it was only with difficulty and reluctance that [Meisel] managed to submit to the laws of the sound-film'. Whilst *The Crimson Circle* baffled some British critics in its day – primarily because the underscore was much more intrusive than was normal – many of its techniques would soon become the conventions of classical Hollywood scoring practice for sound features in the 1930s and 1940s. Meisel's eagerness to experiment with microphone and recording technology showed that he fully embraced sound film and all its possibilities.

I Do Love to be Beside the Seaside

Around the same time as his work on *The Crimson Circle*, Meisel scored *I Do Love to be Beside the Seaside*⁴ by Oswell Blakeston. This was Blakeston's directorial debut, preceding his better known *Light Rhythms* (with Francis Bruguière, 1930), one of the earliest British avant-garde films. *Beside the Seaside* was a short avant-garde satire made with the financial backing and acting talents of the Pool Group (the publishers of *Close Up*), including Kenneth Macpherson and Hilda Doolittle. A review of the film's visual technique described the film as 'a brilliant and amusing commentary on the technical devices of many well-known producers of [intellectual] films' (Mercurius 1930). *Close Up* printed two stills in their June 1929 edition, describing the film as 'a new POOL Satire . . . with music by Meisel'. There is little evidence regarding Meisel's score or intentions. Sudendorf reproduced a fragment of a handwritten piano score, entitled 'Baby', which he attributed to *Beside the Seaside* (Sudendorf 1984: 38), but it is not obvious what links them. Sudendorf also suggested that Meisel scored the film as a favour, since Blakeston had used his film

⁴ This film is sometimes titled as *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside*.

connections to promote the composer's work (Sudendorf 1984: 30). It is unlikely that Meisel was paid much, if anything, for his contribution.

According to the director, 'the only print of the film was destroyed by fire during the Second World War' (Dusinberre 1980: 37). Today, all that survives of the film and its genesis are fourteen stills and a six-year world-wide distribution rights contract dated 24 April 1929, written in French, between Pierre Braunberger and Blakeston (see OBII.11.5 and OBIII.22.7). Braunberger, the former director of Paramount's publicity department in Paris, was a leading independent producer and sponsor of French commercial, documentary and avant-garde films. His production company, Néo-Film, produced films by the likes of Jean Renoir and Alberto Cavalcanti. In May 1929 he established Studio-Film to distribute and sell avant-garde films throughout the world (Abel 1984: 32 and 271; Braunberger and Gerber 1987: 52–3). *Beside the Seaside* is also listed with films by Cavalcanti, Dulac and Man Ray (some of the same directors Blakeston was satirising) in an advertisement for Studio-Film in the November and December 1929 issues of *Close Up*. The Film Society never included the film in their programmes, although they did hire others from Studio-Film (see FS31a). There is evidence of a potential London screening at the Avenue Pavilion, Shaftesbury Avenue, at the end of their season of French films, held mid-October to early December 1929 (*Bioscope* 1929-09-04); otherwise the fate of the film is unknown. Meisel's activities after *Beside the Seaside* and *The Crimson Circle* have proved as difficult to trace as those during his first few months in London. The last quarter of 1929 would be filled with even more disappointments than the first.

***Potemkin* at the Film Society**

Montagu and Isaacs met Eisenstein at La Sarraz in September 1929 and invited him to give a series of lectures to the Film Society. According to a *Film-Kurier* report (1

November 1929), Eisenstein finally arrived in Britain on 30 October (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 99, fn. *). For some time, Montagu had been battling to obtain permission for the Film Society to screen *Potemkin*; the British Board of Film Censorship had banned the film for public exhibition on 30 September 1926, because of its alleged violent content (Taylor 2000: 114). In July 1929, Montagu surmounted the legal obstacles by personally paying for both *Potemkin* and *October* to be imported from the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin. As already discussed, Montagu had planned to screen both films whilst Eisenstein and Meisel were in London, but in the event only *Potemkin* was screened.⁵ The Film Society Collection, held by the BFI, includes a file of invoices and letters from Montagu pertaining to the screening of *Potemkin* (FS15.5.33) and some relevant financial documents (FS24b). An invoice dated 24 July 1929 from the Transoceanic Forwarding Company (London) gives the length of the imported *Potemkin* print as 4005 feet (c. 1221 metres). This print would probably have contained either no titles at all or just flash titles, since it was common for ‘foreign negatives [to] be shipped with flash titles – titles of two or three frames, which cut down the overall footage, reducing shipping costs and import duty’ (Brownlow 1989 [1968]: 299). Montagu prepared the English titles himself from Russian title lists and synopses, also obtained from the Soviet Trade delegation in Berlin.

At their AGM in September 1929, the Film Society Council declared their intention to screen *Potemkin* during the forthcoming season (R. H. 1929-09-21). *Potemkin* was shown during the season’s opening programme, the 33rd show, on 10 November 1929 at the Tivoli Palace, Strand. This was the first Film Society programme to be held at the Tivoli, a premiere London theatre wired for sound films. Previous events had taken place at the smaller New Gallery Kinema in Regent Street,

⁵ Some of the ensuing discussion formed part of my paper entitled ‘Sunday afternoon at the Film Society: Some herring, a mouse and three stone lions’, given at a conference entitled *The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain Conference 2: Performance, Realisation and Reception* at Stewart House, University of London, and The Barbican Centre, 7–8 April 2011.

but their Sunday screenings had become ‘so fashionable [that they] had to transfer from . . . a cinema holding 1400 to one accommodating between two and three thousand’ (Montagu 1975: 223). The sheer diversity of those attending this grand season opener is expressed in the following reviews:

[The Tivoli was] packed to overflowing with a mixed audience, including distinguished M.P.s, provincial film executives, directors, artists, authors and pressmen. (Bioscope 1929-11-13)

[The] pavement of the Strand . . . was . . . crowded with the most diverse and peculiar collection of people I have ever seen in London.

A good many had no hats, but to make up for that they had between them a quite astonishing number of hairy chins. Plus-fours, queer-coloured flannel trousers, and immaculate morning coats were inextricably jumbled.

(Daily Express 11 November 1929 [?]; see FS11)

This particular programme became a landmark in the society’s history, presenting as it did a double premiere of Eisenstein’s *Potemkin* and John Grierson’s *Drifters* (1929), the latter launching the British documentary-film movement. Four films were screened that afternoon, each with a different method of accompaniment (The Film Society 1972: 128–131). This was quite typical of Film Society programmes in the 1920s, for which the Council voted on the most appropriate method of accompaniment for a particular film. The sonic practices in the 33rd programme ranged literally from silence to sound. The programme began with a short American abstract film, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (dir. Melville Webber/James Watson, 1928), screened without accompaniment. Grierson’s poetic account of the herring industry in the Shetland Islands followed; there is anecdotal evidence that *Drifters* may have been accompanied by a series of gramophone records, including Mendelssohn’s *Fingal’s Cave Overture* (Ford 2011). Prior to *Potemkin*, the Society showed their first sound film, a Mickey Mouse cartoon entitled *The Barn Dance* (dir. Walt Disney, 1928; score by Carl Stalling). It was unusual for the Film Society to screen such a commercial film, but it was probably at Eisenstein’s request, the

director having hurried to see Disney cartoons the same day he arrived in London (Leyda 1988: 1). The review in the London *Star* newspaper described Mickey as

the pet of the highbrows. . . . [T]he interested hum as the announcement went up left no doubt to the popularity of these sound cartoons with the members.

Mickey was the star turn of the afternoon. (*Star* 11 November 1929 [?]; see FS11)

Meisel conducted the orchestra for *Potemkin* and also the National Anthem at the end of the programme, the latter apparently with some vigour and enthusiasm (Baughan 1929-11-11; see FS11). There is no evidence that the orchestra was employed elsewhere in the programme, yet the costs are listed as £95. This is more than twice the amount for most other programmes and almost a quarter of the total orchestra expenditure for the entire season of eight programmes (see FS24b). Budget restraints and the physical limitations of the orchestra pit at the Tivoli probably resulted in Meisel only having a small salon orchestra at his disposal (Riley 2011).

The Secretary of the Film Society, Miss J. M. Harvey, had sent a rather belated invitation to Meisel to conduct his score, dated two days before the performance (FS15.5.33). Presumably this was just out of courtesy and Meisel had been given more notice to prepare for the performance. Whatever the case, Meisel had a dilemma: his score did not fit the available print. A copy of Montagu's retitled print is still held by the BFI and has been examined by Patalas (2005: 32) during his various reconstructions of *Potemkin*. It is only 1264 metres in length and is therefore considerably shorter than any of the versions censored in Berlin between 1926 and 1928 (see Appendix II). This instantly invalidates the claim in the Film Society programme that their print was complete (The Film Society 1972: 130), and Montagu's later claim that the Film Society showed *Potemkin* 'for the first time in Britain complete and uncensored' (Montagu 1968: 31). Assuming a projection speed of 18 fps, Montagu's print would have had a runtime almost ten minutes shorter than the most recent German version from June 1928 and almost sixteen minutes shorter than the Berlin premiere version from April 1926. Faced with more music than film,

Meisel had to either make cuts in the score or have sections of the film projected at a slower rate, or a combination of the two. There is already a high degree of flexibility built into the score – such as repeated sections, ‘repeat until’ instructions and *tremolo* pause chords – to cope with the uncertainties of live performance and minor changes in running time. Meisel was the person most able to adapt the score at short notice: the extra expenditure on the orchestra would suggest that he may have arranged additional rehearsals for this purpose. The success of the Film Society performance was of paramount importance to Meisel, especially since it was the director’s first opportunity to hear the *Potemkin* score. Simply slowing down the projection rate to make the film fit the duration of the music was not a viable option, as it would not guarantee that individual points of audio-visual synchronization would be achieved.

Meisel’s strong visual and dramatic sensibilities – and his allegiance to Eisenstein – therefore make it unlikely that he would have considered slowing down the projection rate unless absolutely necessary. Yet, according to Eisenstein, ‘[Meisel], at his own risk – in the interests of the music – . . . made arrangements with the film projectionist to *slow down slightly the tempo of the projection*’ (Eisenstein 1987: 314; written in the 1940s). This supposedly had disastrous results for the three consecutive shots of sculpted lions which appear during the bombardment of the Odessa theatre, after the massacre on the steps. The lions are supposed to combine in the mind’s eye, creating the image of a single lion leaping to his feet as the surrounding upheaval ‘shakes even statues to life’ (Bordwell 2005: 76–7). Instead,

[d]ue to the attention drawn to it by ‘overexposure’, the immediacy of the ‘shock’ at one’s perception passed into the *realization of a device* – into an ‘exposure of the trick’, – and the auditorium responded instantly with the inevitable reaction – amiable laughter – unavoidable in all those cases when the ‘trick failed to come off’. (Eisenstein 1987: 314)

Patalas made some intriguing observations on the choice of projection speed for his latest restored print, performed at the 2005 Berlinale with Imig’s reconstructed score:

For the performance and the recording the film was run at 18 fps, which was Imig's preferred speed. The film was certainly shot for a slower speed. Run at 16 fps, no slow-motion effect is produced at any stage. Yet Meisel's music demands a faster tempo. Kleiner wanted 20 fps for his recording, but Imig thought that too fast. (2005: 40–1, n 31)

This suggests that, in order for the stone lions sequence to appear so comically slow and disjointed that it invokes laughter, it would have been necessary to project the film at an even slower rate than 16 fps during the Film Society performance, which seems implausible. Eisenstein's 'memory' of the occasion may well be a fabrication and evidence of his professional jealousy. Annoyed that his serious 'sculptural metaphor' had invoked laughter, Eisenstein probably found it easier to blame Meisel than accept that the highly film-literate audience had seen through his artifice. As Montagu later recalled,

though the show was triumphant Eisenstein was in a bad mood. . . . First he complained that our opening film [second on the programme] – Grierson's 'Drifters' – had given away all the best parts in 'Potemkin'. (There is some truth in this. Grierson had cut and titled 'Battleship Potemkin' in New York⁶ and studied it carefully, admitting the debt he owed to it in his first and most famous film, which fathered British documentary). Then, at the end, when everyone was applauding the great 'Potemkin' climax he complained that, with the Meisel music, we had turned his picture into an opera. (Montagu 1968: 31–2)

Eisenstein's *Potemkin* had not lived up to its notoriety. The director's annoyance over the audience's enthusiastic response to Grierson's film and Meisel's score that Sunday afternoon was amplified by the press reviews during the following days. These expressed a definite preference for *Drifters* (see press clippings in FS11) and many heaped praise on Meisel's score, particularly the effectiveness of the last reel:

Edmund Meisel's musical accompaniment seemed to be much finer than the film itself, and, incidentally, the composer conducted a more impressive performance of 'God Save the King' than I have heard for many a day. (Baughan 1929-11-11)

⁶ For the American premiere at the Biltmore Theatre, June 1926.

[*Potemkin*] is pretty fierce stuff, there's no doubt. I had seen it twice before but cold, and much as I appreciated its power and brilliance, I had never got half the kick I got from it on Sunday last with Meisel's music. Why, my heart – and I am not a hysterical fellow, by a long way – was thumping like a piston towards the end, thanks to the excitement of Meisel's rhythms and realistic tones.

(Onlooker 1929-11-13)

In his score for 'Potemkin' Edmund Meisel . . . , [t]akes what are in essence non-melodic, representational sounds, such as the beat of a piston, creates a rhythmic sequence with them and weaves them into his music, which is an attempt to create aurally the impressions rendered by the various incidents in the film.

The best example of his work is the climax of 'Potemkin'. The cruiser is in possession of the revolted crew, and the admiral's fleet is steaming towards them. . . .

An amazingly thrilling suspense is created by the skilful editing of the various shots showing the preparations on board the cruiser, supplemented by Meisel's music.

Besides the normal melodic *motif* of the music, Meisel has achieved a rhythmic sound *motif* representing the noise of the vessel's engines. The insistence of this rhythm, combined with the cutting of the film, works us into what is almost an agony of suspense, until the crews of the fleet indicate their sympathy and the 'Potemkin' steams through in triumph. (*Film Weekly* 1929-11-18)

The *Daily Mail* reviewer was a rare dissenting voice, describing how the composer

appears to have been led away by the cruder aspects of the film.

The greater part of his music has an inexorable march rhythm over which he scores appropriate cacophony, appropriate suggestions such as that of the Marseillaise, and a few inappropriate commonplaces. Doubtless he may succeed in creating a kind of riotous hypnosis which, combined with the incidents on the screen, conveys the atmosphere of revolutionary hysteria.

But it is crudely done by the most facile methods, without any subtlety to correspond with the means by which the film itself achieves its effects. Much of the music has only the loosest connection with the film.

(The Film Critic 1929-11-11)

These two reviews in *Film Weekly* and the *Daily Mail* encapsulate the opposing views regarding Meisel's technique, which had divided commentators in Germany.

London Postscript: Whatever happened to *The General Line*?

After *The Crimson Circle*, Meisel had been expecting to post-synchronize Eisenstein's *The General Line*; the pair had discussed the progress of the film in their correspondence since Meisel's visits to Moscow. Meisel had first asked the director when the film would be ready in a letter dated 6 June 1928 and subsequent letters confirm his eagerness to compose a score for it. In the event, the film was not finished until the following summer. Throughout almost all his stay in London, Meisel was still expecting the project to come to fruition, but it never did.

Eisenstein first began work on *The General Line* in June 1926, shortly after returning from his trip to Berlin. Unlike his other silent films, the plot had a central character, a peasant woman called Marfa Lapkina, who struggles to unite her fellow peasants into a glorious cooperative, in line with the recent order of the Fourteenth Party Congress for voluntary collectivization of the agricultural industry. In September 1926, Eisenstein received a commission to make *October* for the tenth anniversary celebrations the following year. This caused an interruption to the shooting of *The General Line* from January 1927 until June 1928, by which time much had changed in the film world, due to the arrival of sound film, and also politically in Soviet Russia. The following month, between 19 and 20 July 1928, Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Pudovkin formulated their famous sound manifesto (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 87). This statement was first published in *Lichtbild-Bühne* (Eisenstein *et al.* 1928-07-28), a week before it appeared in *Zhizn' iskustva* on 5 August 1928 (Schlegel 1984: 281). From this point on, *The General Line* and sound theories became intertwined for Eisenstein and he fully intended this to be his first sound film. Eisenstein finally completed *The General Line* in February 1929 and it was shown to the production company, Sovkino. Soon after, Stalin himself became involved; his criticisms and 'suggestions' resulted in a revised ending, shot at the 'Giant' State Farm at Tselina Station, near Rostov-on-the-Don, and a title change to

The Old and the New (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 91–3). Meanwhile, Meisel asked Eisenstein to send him some sound notes in the spring of 1929, before Stalin's revisions had been carried out (Meisel to Eisenstein, London, 17 March 1929). Based on his knowledge of the scenario alone, Meisel made some suggestions to Eisenstein:

For 'The General Line', we are thinking of using a lot of speaking and singing chorus, a lot of animal voices and solo instruments. There are endless possibilities [in sound experiments] which have been lying waste until now. Quite unbelievable effects are achievable if they are done correctly!

(Meisel to Eisenstein, London, 5 April 1929)

As the film industry in Soviet Russia would not have the resources to invest in sound-film equipment for some years, Eisenstein knew that the film would remain silent in his own country and wrote to Leon Moussinac that

It is my obsession to add sound to *Old and New*. Have to do that abroad. I'm still not sure if everything will go *as I like it*. That's why this must stay *entre nous*.

(Eisenstein to Moussinac, Moscow, 4 June 1929; reproduced in Moussinac 1970: 35)

In the event, Stalin's interference caused completion of the film to be delayed until the summer of 1929 and the Moscow premiere did not take place until 7 October 1929 (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 98), by which time Eisenstein had been in Europe for some weeks.

Eisenstein, together with his colleagues Alexandrov and Tissé, left Moscow on 19 August for a European tour, en route to the USA to study sound-film techniques. The director took a copy of the recently revised *General Line* with him (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 93). Two days prior to departure, Eisenstein had typed out his ideas for the planned sound version of his new film; presumably he also took these notes with him to Europe, in order to send them to Meisel. This document has been published in Russian with an introduction and commentary by Kleiman (1985), with translations available in German (Schlegel 1984: 174–80) and English (Leyda and Voynow 1985: 38–40). The latter included a facsimile of Eisenstein's handwritten date (17 August

1929). The Ivor Montagu Collection (IM118) contains a much shorter and simpler version of the sound plan in English, which has been widely overlooked. This English précis is highly entertaining and was probably typed by Montagu, with the director at his shoulder dictating and improvising additional comments. The funniest embellishment in the English précis occurs in the instructions for Reel 3, when Marfa dreams of buying a bull for the collective in order to impregnate their cows. The bull has a mooing leitmotif which reaches a climax during the scene of impregnation (Leyda and Voynow 1985: 39), expressed more forcefully in the English précis as ‘Moos in industrial theme syncopation, swelling into a gigantic Wagnerian moo as the bull mounts in the sky’.

There are some errors in the German translation of Eisenstein’s sound notes (Bulgakowa 1996: 266, n 249) and some similar discrepancies in Leyda’s English translation. The full sound plan contains prefatory instructions outlining three types of sound, the degrees of those sounds (with regard to speed, distortion and volume) and their uses, followed by ideas for each reel. Eisenstein wanted to use real animal noises, as Meisel had suggested earlier in April 1929, but he did not want any discernible dialogue, just human sounds such as weeping, moaning and laughter emanating from the peasants. The main ‘characters’ were to have leitmotifs that were clear stylistic parodies: for example, a lyrical Slavonic style for peasants, a syncopated American (probably ragtime) style for industrialization, and Hawaiian guitar for the bull’s wedding scene. His thematic suggestions reveal a surprisingly unsophisticated approach to the use of music, possibly symptomatic of his general lack of ‘musical taste’. Kahn has suggested that Eisenstein’s aural imagination was curtailed for another reason:

[If] the quickness of the cutting had been paralleled with like speed in sound cutting the result would have fallen on laggard ears. Historically, there had not yet been the cumulative decades of auditive mass media needed to produce a properly accelerated comprehension of code, such as television channel

switching . . . Eisenstein was still relying on the cumbersome Wagnerian leitmotiv, i.e. a clichéd music or an internal construction of code. (Kahn 1992)

By contrast, Eisenstein's approach to sound is more progressive. Firstly the themes would have simple rhythms that could be parodied by animal noises, machine noises, or comic instruments such as ocarinas and combs. Eisenstein also wanted the ability to make one sound transform seamlessly into another via means of distortion, as in the instructions for reel 4 where a distorted fanfare becomes the crying of a baby. This would be the audio equivalent of the slow dissolve camera tricks he had used in *Strike* (1925), where people metamorphosed into animals representing their character type. It is also reminiscent of the behaviour of cartoon characters, which, delimited only by the animator's pen, had complete freedom of movement and a rubbery flexibility that allowed them to change into different shapes. Kleiman (1985) noted Eisenstein's acquaintance with the Termen-Vox (theremin), one of the first electronic musical instruments, and Eisenstein's fascination with pitches between the notes of the well-tempered scale. This all added to his desire to create and manipulate his own sound material.

In Leyda and Voynow's translation, the three distinct types of sound in Eisenstein's prefatory instructions are translated as musical, natural surroundings and 'animated cartoon', the latter qualified in an editorial comment as 'rhythmically synchronized – the term "mickey mousing" is still in use in American recording studios' (Leyda and Voynow 1985: 38). Similarly in the German translation the third category is translated as 'Multiplikativ', with an editorial qualification for 'Trickton' or 'cartoon sound' (Schlegel 1984: 174). From his later writings, it is obvious that Eisenstein was captivated by the exact choreography between the movements of Disney's cartoon characters and the contour of the music:

In [Mickey Mouse films] . . . a graceful movement of the foot is accompanied by appropriate music, which is, as it were, the audible expression of the mechanical action. (Eisenstein 1930-08: 143)

Mickey starts to sing, his hands folded together. The hands echo the music as only the movements of Disney's characters are capable of echoing a melody. And then reaching for a high note, the arms shoot up far beyond the limits of their normal representation. In tone to the music, they stretch far beyond the length allotted them. The necks of his surprised horses stretch the same way, or their legs become extended when running.

(Leyda 1988: 10; written September 1940)

Disney's approach matched Eisenstein's own thoughts on the 'inner movement' linking music and picture, as exemplified in his analysis of the 'Battle on the Ice' sequence from *Nevsky* in *Film Sense* (Eisenstein 1943 [1942]: 126–56 and supplementary diagram). However, Eisenstein's first experiences of cartoon sound, specifically Mickey Mouse sound shorts, came shortly after he had written the original sound notes. This immediately casts doubt on the viability of the suggested translations and associated editorial assumptions for the third type of sound in Eisenstein's full sound notes. In the original Russian sound notes, Eisenstein used the word *multiplikatsioniy*, an adjective derived from the term for an animator, or animated-cartoon artist (*multiplikator*). In the English précis this is translated as 'Drawn (or design-imitated) Sounds', suggesting that Eisenstein's real intention was for sound drawn directly onto the film or photographed from markings made onto another medium, then played back through the film projector and sound system. 'Drawn sound' can be completely controlled and manipulated, allowing the sound dissolves Eisenstein desired. Eisenstein may have been aware of the drawn-soundtrack experiments carried out in Leningrad during 1929 by Yevgeny Sholpo and Avraamov (Davies 2001a). In Paris during 1930, Alexandrov and Eisenstein used drawn sound for parts of the soundtrack to their short experimental film *Romance Sentimentale* (for further analysis see Bulgakowa 1996: 132–5). There are indications that Meisel, independently of Eisenstein, was also interested in drawn sound during and after his stay in London:

It is in the composition of sound that Herr Meisel is finding his great interest at present, and he is experimenting with a way of recording music that has not even been played. (R. H. 1929-02-16)

I have read that at the time of his death [Meisel] was experimenting with light rays photographed directly on the sound track. He thought he could, in this way, record an orchestra without musicians. (Schürmann 1947: 177)

Some decades later, Norman McLaren, the Canadian animator, described how he created his drawn sound, using the normal stop-frame animation techniques to take pictures of pre-drawn sound waves, which were then developed directly onto the narrow vertical strip of the film reserved for the sound track. Subsequently,

[w]hen the film . . . is run on a sound projector, the photographed images of these . . . drawings are heard as either noise, sound effects, or music. It is therefore logical to call the kind of sound produced in this way ‘animated’ sound, for it is made by the same method as animated pictures . . .

(McLaren and Jordan 1953: 224)

Leyda and Voynow’s ‘animated cartoon’ translation would be better translated as either ‘drawn sound’ or, using McLaren’s term, ‘animated sound’.

Supposedly, by the time Eisenstein departed for Europe in August 1929, ‘the financial and technical arrangements [had] been assured for a London production . . . [but the] promised financing for the London recording of *Old and New* was withdrawn’ (Leyda and Voynow 1985: 38 and fn. †). This is an over-simplification, as the documentary evidence in Meisel’s letters and correspondence from Montagu to Eisenstein (IM104) demonstrates. Initially, Eisenstein was hedging his bets, unsure whether to make the sound version in Berlin or London. For example, the same day he arrived in Berlin (21 August 1929), *Film-Kurier* announced that Eisenstein wanted to stay in Berlin for the sound recording and premiere of *The General Line*, and gave the following statement from the director:

“Yes, *The General Line* must have sound. From my point of view, it must not be a synchronization: like the film, the sound must be a self-standing component of the whole”.

(cited in Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 93–4)

A few days later and around the same time *The Crimson Circle* had its London trade premiere, the German correspondent for *Bioscope* reported that *The General Line* would 'be synchronized in London by Edmund Meisel, and under the producer's personal supervision' (Fraenkel 1929-08-28). For some months, Meisel and Montagu had been approaching several companies on Eisenstein's behalf. These included BIFD, British Instructional Films, Derussa (acronym for Deutsch-russische Film-Allianz) and Tobis (in Berlin). Meisel, Zimmerman (a director of BIFD) and Woolfe (British Instructional Films) attended a screening of *The General Line* (Montagu to Eisenstein, London, 2 October 1929, IM104).

Meisel, having at last seen the film and presumably also Montagu's version of the sound notes, was now able to estimate the number of orchestral players and studio time required for the proposed synchronization. This information was included in a detailed cost estimate (undated) prepared by Montagu, which still survives in his papers (IM118). There is no mention in the document of any likely setbacks at the Wembley studios due to the fire on 20 October 1929, implying that the document was drawn up before this date. The document compares costs and facilities at three London studios equipped for sound: Wembley (BTP), Elstree (RCA) and Gainsborough (RCA) and is an invaluable snapshot of the various groups of personnel involved in making early sound films in London. According to this estimate, Meisel had agreed to a sum of £500 for composition, conducting and film rights and had estimated a requirement of twenty-five players, five studio days and three rehearsals. The number of players is virtually the same as for *The Crimson Circle* synchronization (twenty-six), so Meisel must have envisaged using similar instrumental combinations. The cast would consist of '8 men and 4 women singers, some laughers, and an animal imitator'.

Many of Eisenstein's ideas for *The General Line* prefigure magnetic-tape editing and electronic sampling, but in 1929 the only available technology in London

capable of realizing his ideas was the Blattner-Stille magnetic recording system. Eisenstein praised the possibilities of magnetic recording in an article published in *Close Up* (Eisenstein 1930-08). This technology was still very expensive and had the drawback of a constant background hiss, but at least it offered some editing capabilities. Eisenstein was certainly hoping to use the Blattner-Stille system, as it is mentioned in Montagu's synchronization cost estimate that 'If certain experimental facilities on the Blattner-Stille steel tape can be obtained, as is now being discussed, this should help in . . . reduction [of costs]' (IM118). Ultimately, no company had sufficient funds to risk financing the synchronization: British Instructional Films were experiencing financial difficulties (Meisel to Eisenstein, London, 31 August 1929) and Derussa crashed spectacularly in September 1929, owing liabilities in excess of one million German marks (Fraenkel 1929-10-02).

The General Line was eventually screened at the Film Society on 4 May 1930, a few days before Eisenstein left Europe for the USA. According to the programme notes

[*The General Line*] was originally intended to be the first Russian sound-picture, and Messrs. Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov have issued an important manifesto concerning the utilization of sound in films. Unfortunately it was not possible to arrange for synchronization, and the music accompanying the film to-day, although carefully arranged and adjusted, must not be taken as conveying Mr. Eisenstein's intentions in more than general outline.

(The Film Society 1972: 158)

Despite their best efforts, Eisenstein, Meisel and Montagu never managed to create their 'gigantic Wagnerian moo'. Today, Eisenstein's ambitious plans could be easily and affordably realized in an electronic studio, but his ideas were too far in advance of the technology available in 1929 and too risky a venture at a time when most film studios in London were struggling to maintain financial viability:

Eisenstein's lack of experience [in sound film] apparently sanctioned a wish-list freed from practicality – just as well, [since] many ideas would have been technically difficult or impossible to realise at the time – or perhaps he was

intent with his very first sound project to establish a systematic practice commensurate in sophistication with visual montage. (Kahn 1992)

Had this venture materialized, it would have been Eisenstein's first sound film and possibly one of the most entertaining and experimental sound films from the period. It would also have been the audio-visual manifestation of the principles laid down in his sound manifesto.

In 2011, the BFI Southbank screened a retrospective of Russian cinema entitled *Kino: Russian Film Pioneers 1909–1957*, which opened on 5 May with *The Old and the New*. The BFI commissioned a new score from Max de Wardener and Ed Finnis, in collaboration with the Elysian Quartet (BFI 2011). Their score was realized by string quartet, double bass, electronic keyboard and an array of special effects generated through extended techniques on the string instruments, gongs, rustling paper, handbells, crystal glasses and an autoharp. The most effective sections were those where motifs directly inspired by Eisenstein's sound notes were developed into more motoric, minimalistic backdrops (for example the 'sawing' motif and those for the cream separator and tractor). Generally, however, it was a missed opportunity because there was no use of human voices and the palette of the string quartet was ultimately unable to generate satisfying audio dissolves or animal noises. The 'mooring' did not approach the Wagnerian heights Eisenstein had envisaged.

Part Five

1930: Back in Berlin

11 The state of sound film in Germany

Germany was lagging behind Britain in converting its cinemas to sound technology and had equipped only four per cent (223) nationwide by the end of 1929. Most of these were in Berlin – typically in venues with medium to large seating capacities – and had dual-purpose equipment for either sound-on-film or sound-on-disc (Jason 1931: 27 and 30). By comparison, Britain had converted fifteen per cent of cinemas (685) within the same time period and America almost a quarter by mid-1929 (Low 1997 [1985]: 75; Crafton 1999: 253). Fewer American sound films had been screened in Germany than in Britain, for two important reasons. Language conversion problems had prevented the American companies from easily exporting their sound films into continental Europe, forcing them to try various solutions, such as

dubbing, subtitles, and native language narrators . . . with little success. The most promising, dubbing, was fraught with technological limitations, and caused adverse audience reaction. Consequently the Hollywood monopolists began to produce foreign language versions of feature films and short subjects.

(Gomery 1985: 27)

The two largest German sound-film companies were Tobis (Tonbild Syndikat A.G.), which had taken over Tri-Ergon-Musik A.G. in August 1928, and Klangfilm, a new sound-on-film company formed in October 1928 by the two leading German electrical manufacturers, AEG and Siemens-Halske (Prinzler 1995: 83). Early in 1929, these two companies became embroiled in a legal battle over patent rights (Fraenkel 1929-02-13), but by March 1929 had joined forces with another rival, the Dutch Kuechenmeister holding company. Together they formed a giant European multinational cartel ‘to consolidate joint control of the European sound-film industry, and to resist the American electrical and business firms who were energetically moving into the same market’ (Higson and Maltby 1999: 15). The battle over patent

rights continued against their common enemy, America, further delaying German investment in sound film:

[The cartel] engaged in a patents war with the major American companies, significantly limiting the operations of the latter, and for a while no US films could be shown in Germany. . . . Matters were more or less resolved at the Paris Sound Picture Conference of 1930 . . . when a new international cartel agreement was agreed, according to which the world sound-film market was carved up between the major American and European interests.

(Higson and Maltby 1999: 16)

The German art and film critic Rudolf Arnheim made reference to these sound-patent disputes in Germany and the reception of early sound films in articles for *Die Weltbühne* between 1928 and 1933. He summed up the frustration in the German film world over the internecine battles thus:

While sound film is celebrating noisy triumphs in New York and London, the European continent has been content with its role as a silent, speechless viewer, and the only thing that can be heard here is the shouting of the professional and money people fighting over the patents. Duels between German companies. Should American machines be approved? . . . Today it still looks as though cinema-owners may need to buy seven different projection systems in order to screen the domestic and international sound films which have been shot in various ways—but this situation cannot last long.

(Arnheim 1929-04-23; translated as ‘Sound Film Confusion’ in Arnheim 1997: 32–3)

Elsewhere in his writings on film, Arnheim has left firsthand accounts of the recording fidelity in the newly equipped Berlin cinemas. These are invaluable, since however much we might be amused by the high-pitched voices and kitsch sound effects in surviving early sound films, it is important to remember that we are hearing the sound – possibly digitally remastered – through modern reproduction equipment. We can only begin to imagine how the films must have sounded originally, using much inferior technology:

Small wonder that patrons protested and stayed away, and decided that sound film was bad, when one remembers the horribly raucous abortions that were loosed on the public; lightning productions of an industry harried by

competition, in which a kiss sounded like a clap of thunder and a woman's voice like the siren of a factory. These early efforts were inferior films shown by inferior projecting machines. . . . The sounds failed to synchronise with the picture because the machinery was imperfect. Silent films were distributed as 'sound films' with a musical accompaniment that had been hastily recorded and fitted to them. (Arnheim 1933: 203)

The transition to sound in European film studios during 1929–30 yielded similar hybrid film types to those produced by America during 1928, whereby existing silent-film stock was re-issued with post-synchronizations of music and effects, sometimes as part-talkies. With the exception of Al Jolson's part-talkies *The Jazz Singer* and *The Singing Fool* (Lloyd Bacon, 1928), most American hybrid sound films rarely get mentioned in sound-film histories and are not regarded as true sound films, because they were directed chiefly according to silent-film practices. Those hybrids made by European film companies during 1929 and 1930, at a time when America was already churning out more sophisticated sound films in significant quantities, are equally overlooked. Such part-talking films were a valid commercial response at a time when European studios were still acquiring experience in recording technology and generally lacked sound studios capable of making feature-length sound films. These hybrid films are fascinating for film-music historians, because they often have a much more extensive and varied musical accompaniment than many later sound films from the 1930s, when music was often confined to a brief overture, a closing fanfare and diegetic moments of music-making. Meisel's feature-length sound-film work, starting with *The Crimson Circle*, resides precisely during this experimental period in European film history, when fledgling sound-film companies were negotiating the transition to sound.

The late German writer Ulrich Klaus began an ambitious private research project in the 1980s, trawling through German censorship documents, film yearbooks, trade journals, film programmes and advertisements to catalogue all feature-length German sound films released in Germany from 1929 to 1945. Klaus included only

those films which were made by German production companies or were made in the German language. He catalogued 145 sound features for 1929–30 (Klaus 1988), out of which 46 were originally silent films with post-synchronized sound. Meisel's sound films from 1930 – the sound version of *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin* and *Der blaue Expreß* (the latter posthumously released using a sound-on-film process in France in 1931) – are not included in the inventory, because both films were originally made in Russia. Klaus's figures do include several German-made silent films which were post-synchronized in other countries – as for example *The Crimson Circle* – even if they were never released in Germany in their new sound versions. Other genres of sound films (advertisements, newsreels, cartoons, vaudeville acts, etc.) have not yet been similarly researched and catalogued, due to their ephemeral nature and being considered of lower artistic worth within film studies. Such a history would reveal that a considerable number of other German-made sound films (mostly shorts) were shown to the German public in this period, namely 102 and 218 non-feature films for the respective years 1929 and 1930 (Jason 1931: 40).

12 *Potemkin* becomes a sound film

A press release in *Film-Kurier* (1930-01-15) announced the return of Meisel and his wife to Berlin and the composer's intention to have a break after the concentrated period of work in London. There were soon reports in the press of his various plans. For example, it was announced that Meisel would once more be working with Fanck on his first sound film, *Stürme über dem Montblanc* (*Film-Kurier* 1930-03-21). Whilst this project came to fruition later in 1930, many other potential projects fell by the wayside: these have been summarized in Appendix IV. It was not unusual for film projects to fail at this time, due to lack of investment and a time of general economic depression, but Meisel does appear to have made a shaky start on returning to Berlin, despite the advantage of his sound-film work in London. In Berlin he was still best remembered for his *Potemkin* style of rhythmic noise-music and the avant-garde label attached to him since his *Berlin* score. Meisel was actively trying to overcome this pigeonholing and had ended a press statement with the comment 'I really am writing melodious music now' (Meisel 1930-01-01). Sudendorf (1984: 31) attributed this change in style to the disappointments Meisel had incurred in London, but the composer appears to have become infatuated with the popular music he experienced in London's cinemas and theatres.

Surprisingly, Meisel was not involved with the Prometheus release of *The General Line*. The Berlin censors had first passed *The General Line* on 6 November 1929 with a few scenes excised, but the film was not screened for some months. After a second censorship on 7 February 1930, Eisenstein's last silent film finally had its German premiere on 10 February at the Mozartsaal, Berlin, under the title *Der Kampf um die Erde* (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 99 and 105). Meisel's allegiance to Eisenstein had supposedly been ruined by the director's own actions:

Relations between Meisel and myself later soured.

Not of course because of [the musical palindrome in *October*]; nor even because he messed up a public screening of *Potemkin* in London in the autumn of '29, when he ran the speed of the projector to suit the music, without my consent, slightly more slowly than it should have been!

This destroyed the dynamism of the rhythmic correlation to such an extent that people laughed at the 'flying lions' for the first time in the film's existence . . .

The reason for the split was his wife, Frau Elisabeth; she was unable to hide—indeed, in an inexplicable outburst, confessed to her husband—a certain liaison that had existed between her and the director of the film for which he had written the music. (Taylor 1995: 546)

The possible opportunities for this liaison include Meisel's earlier visits to Moscow (end of 1927 and early 1928), London (November 1929), and Berlin (January 1930). Exactly when Els made her admission to her husband is not known and we only have Eisenstein's word for the affair and its aftermath. Seton (1978: 130) mentioned a social occasion in Berlin, where Eisenstein 'spent an evening playing Spanish music' at Meisel's house, in the company of Feld and Feld's wife. This occasion may have taken place towards the end of January 1930 around the time of the director's birthday, when Eisenstein was in Berlin for a few weeks (Sudendorf *et al.* 1975: 104). If true, it suggests that relations between the composer and director were not 'sour' at that particular point. T

After a slow start, Meisel was thrown into a sudden flurry of activity, due to several commissions from Prometheus and Piscator. Towards the end of June 1930, Prometheus began an extensive press campaign to advertise their forthcoming sound version of *Potemkin*. They announced that Meisel would be conducting his own original music, and that there would be a sound-effects ensemble and two choruses (singers and speakers) to illustrate the crowd scenes (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-06-23). Moreover, an English-language version was planned for Britain and America, but this was unrealized. Meisel also sent a press release to *Close Up*, in which he stated that he would be using a 25-man orchestra (Blakeston 1930-09), more in keeping with the size of the orchestra at the Apollo Theater in April 1926. The new print was based on

Jutzi's last approved edit for the revival of *Potemkin* in June 1928, but, after the removal of the intertitles and sundry changes, was ultimately shorter by more than 100 metres (see Appendix II). The chief structural difference lay in the reinstatement of a five-act structure (but not Eisenstein's original divisions) over Jutzi's six-fold arrangement. Prometheus, having recently fallen out with Jutzi, assigned the task of preparing the dialogue to Alois Johannes Lippl, a young sound director and playwright (Tode 2003: 35). *Film-Kurier* (9 August 1930) described the style of the spoken language thus:

The main task, about which the sound director and composer are united, consisted in stylizing speech as sound. In place of the titles, which naturally were dropped, there is a commentary in the style of a telegram. Word and music were employed according to mood: occasionally together, then separated.

(reproduced in Tode 2003: 35)

There is a significant amount of articles and artefacts relating to the sound version of *Potemkin*, including some extant audio and visual sources. Whilst neither score nor parts have survived, twelve themes from a non-extant suite arranged by the composer were published in a supplement to *Berliner Tageblatt* (1930-08-02), the day after the film was censored. Meisel originally recorded the sound onto wax discs using the Organon GmbH im Polyphon-Grammophon-Konzern system and equipment provided by the Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft (U. 1930-07-25). The last two acts of a *Potemkin* sound-film print with Meisel's score and sound effects were discovered and screened during Leipzig's International Documentary Film Festival in 1973 as part of the retrospective 'Film in Klassenkampf – Traditionen der proletarischen Filmbewegung in Deutschland vor 1933'; a similar screening occurred at the Metropolis in Hamburg in June 1982 (Sudendorf 1984: 95). Exactly how and when Meisel's disc-based soundtrack was copied onto film is a mystery. It is possible that Gance made this version in Paris after Meisel's death, as in the case of *Der blaue Expresß* (see Chapter 13).

In 2003, three complete sets of sound discs for the 1930 *Potemkin* film were unearthed in the Technisches Museum Wien (Tode 2003: 23), enabling some aural analysis. Each set has five discs, corresponding to the original number of film reels (see Figure 12.1 for the label of the third disc). A digital reconstruction and synchronization of the *Potemkin* sound film has been made by members of the Filminstitut, Universität der Künste Berlin, under the direction of Patalas (Honorary Professor), as part of the project entitled *Die digitale Bildplatte [DVD] als Medium kritischer Filmeditionen (DVD as a Medium for Critical Editions of Films)*. This reconstruction, discussed briefly in Patalas (2005: 40), is due to be screened at the 2012 Berlinale. From the indication ‘Vorführ-Geschwindigkeit 24 Bilder’ on the record label in Figure 12.1, it is evident that the sound version of *Potemkin* was projected at standard sound-film speed, 24 fps.



12.1 Label from third *Potemkin* sound disc, 1930 (Source: Martin Reinhart)

Whilst several reports claim that the editing of *Potemkin* remained unchanged (for example *Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-07-18), the faster projection speed would have altered the visual experience, since no attempt was made to stretch the film and make the actors’ movements seem more natural (Tode 2003: 35). The sound version lasts

around 49 minutes, whereas reconstructions of the silent *Potemkin* are generally 65–70 minutes in length. Meisel was therefore compelled to create a radically different score.

The advertising campaign generated great expectation and members of the press were invited to attend recording rehearsals in mid-July. The cast consisted of members from the Piscator collective, the Barnowski-Studio and the general community of Berlin actors (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-07-18). Photographs taken at the recording sessions (reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: 26–7) include the stage and film actor Friedrich Gnass, who made over sixty German films – including his role as a burglar in *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (dir. Fritz Lang, 1931). The vivid accounts of these sessions reveal that the recording was made using just two microphones (one for the orchestra, the other for the speakers, singers and sound-effects ensemble) and a duplication machine for dubbing sound effects that had been pre-recorded onto gramophone discs (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-07-18; U. 1930-07-25). These were possibly the same discs Meisel had recorded in 1928 for Deutsche Grammophon or the earlier *Schwejk* production. Reporters attending rehearsals for the Odessa Steps massacre were particularly moved by the varying auditory perspectives and overall effect of the scene, in which Meisel’s music is combined with gunfire, chilling screams, a crying baby and shouts from male and female voices:

[I]n the crowd, which the sailors are hailing, the Cossacks trample and fire their arms. Our imagination is stirred – cries are yelled, sentences are cried – word overlaps word as image overlaps image – there is no conventional dialogue – montages of sounds, montages of words, to montages of images – music underlies and underscores the voices, enforces contrapuntally the cold military power. That old woman – “Shoot, then!” and those screams – one even sees a totally frenzied band of actors moving under a spell – as first one then another leaps forward to the microphone – speech – objection – in spite of the inflammatory situation – or precisely for this reason they synchronize. One is almost dazed – and when one heard the result on the wax disc, one was well-nigh completely converted.

(*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-07-18)

The speaking ensemble faithfully spoke, cried, groaned, and wailed everything in the images rolling by on the screen. Individual cries predominate, and all in a riotous well-rehearsed confusion, a few are made close to the microphone during close-ups, the chorus further away. (U. 1930-07-25)

Mersus, a reporter from *Berlin am Morgen*, attended the rehearsal for the final act.

He gave a detailed account of the recording venue and process:

In one half [of the room] older men . . . are tuning their instruments. In the other half is seated a group of young people, who might be mistaken for an audience, were it not for the microphone standing directly nearby.

Next to some single chairs the visitor sees something which at first glance looks like . . . tin washtubs. Inside there are some small pebbles, gravel, or dried peas and next to it a sort of wooden stirring spoon. It all seems very mystical but at the same time very mundane. Suddenly the hall lights are dimmed and someone up in a gallery, situated opposite at half the height of the screen, cries 'Attention! Recording in progress!'. Meanwhile, Edmund Meisel . . . has taken his place before the orchestra, likewise the 'conductor' [Lipp] of the chorus . . .

A few bars of music then a ship appears on the screen, the Battleship Potemkin! The heads of both conductors are facing the film. The beat and power of the music follow the filmic force of Eisenstein's montage. Individual voices from the chorus chime in. It is the last act: the sailors of the mutinous cruiser discover the admiral's squadron on the horizon. The fleet is getting nearer all the time. . . .

Speaking chorus: 'All against one!' and then the grandiose image of a single mighty cannon mouth.

"One against all!"

A long breathless tension. Will they shoot? The music escalates until the final outcry of anticipation . . . breaks out. A few seconds of the deepest most stressful stillness. Then a voice: the way is free for the Battleship Potemkin! The music recommences . . . triumphant, and mixed with the cries of hurrah from the crew. Whilst the voices gradually become weak and faint, an unemotional and matter-of-fact voice gives a report. The finale of this dramatic fleet tale.

The lights come on! The synchronization rehearsal for the last act of the Potemkin film has ended. A few minutes later we hear the whole musical-acoustic underscoring together on a wax gramophone record, where one can easily tell where voices or instruments were too loud or too soft. Now I am also

well-versed with regard to the purpose of the tin tubs with the strange contents;
they were shaken or stirred, in order to replicate . . . the "roaring" sound of the
sea. (Mersus 1930-07-19)

Tin washtubs and dried peas are some of the mundane objects traditionally used backstage to create sound effects for stage productions. These traditions were carried over into many types of silent-film accompaniment (see Bottomore 1999) and are still used by Foley artists today. Meisel's noise ensemble employed other objects, which would also have been familiar: 'a coffee grinder; . . . thunder sheets; empty bottles, which produce the sound of clashing iron when struck; . . . [and football] rattles with which single gunshots to whole salvos are imitated' (U. 1930-07-25). Most of Meisel's sound effects are achieved within the orchestra, as when the boatswain strikes a young sailor asleep in his hammock (one strike as opposed to two in the silent version), whereas others are more obviously the terrain of the noise ensemble. For example, there is a distinctly metallic 'splash' when Dr Smirnov is thrown in the sea (end of Act II) and wind effects when the *Potemkin* is sailing. The percussion and noise ensemble also play a major role in the 'stone lions' scene, when the cannons of *Potemkin* fire on the Admiralty buildings in protest at the slaughter of innocents. The cannon fire is represented by timpani rolls and sounds of clashing metal, punctuated by minor chords from the upper brass, over sustained repeated-note fanfares from the lower brass. An audio record of how Meisel envisaged this scene is particularly valuable, given the lack of instructions in the 1926 piano score at this point and also the scene's alleged notoriety at the Film Society performance in November 1929. The noise ensemble's biggest role occurs in the final act for the simulation of the ship's engine noises (which could just as easily be used for a train). Once introduced, it continues effectively in tandem with the orchestra and is even allowed an extended passage on its own.

In general, the 1930 score is a truncated version of the original from 1926 and is often intermittent rather than continuous, particularly in the first two acts.

Although the chronological order of the thematic material remains largely unchanged, there is occasionally some new material: for example, a stylized Russian dance when the citizens of Odessa take provisions to the battleship. One of the biggest differences lies in the opening of the sound-film score and is evident from the first two themes published in *Berliner Tageblatt*. The 1926 and 1930 scores both open with the ‘Rebellion’ motif (see Figure 4.1), but set in different keys. The simple timpani roll played underneath the credits in 1926 is replaced by, in Meisel’s terminology, ‘Hauptthema des Vorspiels’ (the second theme published in *Berliner Tageblatt* 1930-08-02). This is the ‘Revolution march’ from Meisel’s *October* score (1928), a simple march reliant on the alternation between tonic and dominant (see Figure 8.1). Imig also used this march for the opening credits in his reconstruction of the *Potemkin* score (2005 Berlinale, silent- film version). Strictly speaking, the *October* extract is anachronous in a reconstruction of any early silent versions of *Potemkin*, unless Meisel introduced the theme into the June 1928 revival of *Potemkin* in Berlin (for which there is no evidence).

About half of the film contains spoken language (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-07-18), ranging from indistinct mutterings amongst several sailors to audible dialogue lines from individual speakers. A fair approximation of the text can be found on the registration card, Prüfung Nr. 26505. There are examples of both accompanied and unaccompanied dialogue throughout: for example, in Act I Dr Smirnov tries to convince the sailors that the meat is perfectly safe to eat, whilst the ‘Maggots’ motif (cf. Figure 4.2 at ‘O’) rises chromatically in the accompaniment, but the scene ends with the mutterings of the restless sailors unaccompanied. Generally the unaccompanied dialogue is regularly interrupted with brief orchestral interjections of only a few bars in length. There are also two stylized monologues declaimed by a male speaker, which frame the film and provide historical explanations. The opening monologue contains three sentences accompanied by a side-drum beating in unison, separated by tonic and dominant interjections from brass and timpani. The final

sentence leads directly into an orchestral storm with added wind effects as the first images of the crashing waves appear. The free rhythms of the opening monologue have been transcribed in Figure 12.2.

12.2 Opening monologue (*Potemkin* sound disc 1)

Freely

Side Drum

Narrator

Am zwölf-ten Ju-ni neun-zehn-hun-dert acht liegt der Pan-zer-kreu-zer Po-tem-kin im

S. D.

Narr.

Golf von Ten-tra zwecks Schieß-ü-bun-gen. Die Mat

S. D.

Narr.

-ro-sen für-der ver-geb-lich ei-ne Ver-bes-ser-ung der Nahr-ung.

S. D.

Narr.

Am drei-zehn-ten Ju-ni wird aus O-des-sa Fleisch ge-bracht,

S. D.

Narr.

das sich we-gen sei-nes üb-len Ge-ru-ches und sei-ne zahl-rei-chen Wür-mer zum Ko-chen nicht eig-net.

(Storm commences)

Translation:

On 12 June 1908 [*sic*; should be 1905] the Battleship *Potemkin* lay in the Gulf of Tendra for the purpose of shooting practice. The sailors asked in vain for an improvement in their food rations. On 13 June meat was brought from Odessa, which, because of its putrid smell and its multitudinous maggots, was not fit for cooking.

The end of the film is a blend of Meisel's 'Victory' theme and the voices of a jubilant *Potemkin* crew, before the volume is greatly reduced for the closing monologue. In

this 1930 version, the orchestra launches straight into the ‘Victory’ theme after the cry of ‘Achtung! Brüder, Fahrt frei für Potemkin’ (‘Attention! Brothers, clear passage for the *Potemkin*’); the intervening seven-bar passage in the piano score at this point is ignored, as it was in several subsequent reconstructions (including those by Mark Andreas and Imig, but not Kleiner).

In many ways, the 1930 *Potemkin* sound film is similar to the Soviet sound version released in 1950 with a score by Kryukov: both have opening and closing explicatory narrations, sound effects and added cheering; and both end with the volume of their scores drastically reduced to make way for the closing commentary. Meisel’s sound film is definitely the more vivid and realistic, because there are moments where the underscore is absent and occasional uses of dramatic silences. There are examples of the latter in Act II, between Commander Golikoff’s orders (he demands that all those who are content with their food rations should step forward) and during the laying of the tarpaulin over those that refused to obey. The lack of intertitles in the 1930 film would also have increased the dramatic flow. Kryukov’s score, heavily reliant on proletarian songs, makes no attempt to synchronize with any diegetic music-making, whereas Meisel makes these moments explicit in his 1930 score, even more so than in the original 1926 version. Trumpet calls and whistles to summon the sailors have varied auditory perspectives, as the signals are communicated round the ship. The ‘Dubinushka’ and ‘Unsterbliche Opfer’ melodies are made more plausibly diegetic: a sailor whistles ‘Dubinushka’ to the gentle accompaniment of an unseen guitar as he dries some dishes and a male chorus sings ‘Unsterbliche Opfer’ whilst individual voices intone the line ‘Um einen Löffel Suppe’ (‘For a spoonful of soup’).

The new *Potemkin* was approved by the censors on 1 August 1930, together with a short *Vorspannfilm*, also with sound (Meier 1962b: 179). Normally, the term *Vorspannfilm* refers to the opening credits, but Tode (2003: 36) has suggested that it was an advertising trailer. The premiere took place on 12 August at the Marmorhaus,

Berlin, with two other sound films: *Sehnsucht (Romance Sentimentale)*; dir. Grigori Alexandrov and Sergei Eisenstein, 1930) and *Die kleine Schraube (Vintik-Shpintik or The Little Screw)*; dir. Vladislav Tvardovsky, 1927). The latter was a Soviet animation concerning the significance of each invisible ‘vintik’ (‘cog’ or ‘little screw’) in the smooth running of a factory. ‘Vintik’ was the term ‘Stalin himself used to define a good Soviet citizen who functions honestly as a cog in the well-oiled state machinery’ (Hakobian 2005: 219). There are also parallels with Ruttmann’s *Berlin*, where the citizens often seemed like cogs essential to the city’s perpetual movement. Meisel had written a song to accompany the Soviet cartoon, which was recorded by the American jazz singer Austin Egen and the Lewis Ruth Band. The trade press printed a whimsical account concerning the origins of the refrain for this title song. Meisel, during a stroll along the Kurfürstendamm, supposedly encountered a chauffeur trying to mend his car and found a tiny missing screw on the floor, enabling the engine to be mended. The press statements ended by comparing the new cartoon to Mickey Mouse sound shorts (*Film-Kurier* 1930-08-02; also *Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-08-09). This animation is not thought to have survived.

The enthusiasm in the reports of the press representatives who attended studio rehearsals for *Potemkin* was not borne out in the premiere reviews. Ultimately, the revitalized *Potemkin* was unable to recreate the huge success and notoriety engendered in 1926. The revolutionary message of the film now had little impact, at a time of dwindling cinema audiences and mass unemployment. Out of the three films screened on 12 August 1930, the reviews for *Die kleine Schraube* were probably the most favourable. Eisenstein’s devotees were bewildered by the esoteric *Sehnsucht* and many considered the sound version of *Potemkin* to be a disfigurement, rather than an enhancement. Ihering, who was vehemently against sound film in general, regarded the talking version of *Potemkin* as a sign of the general confusion and instability caused by the introduction of sound-film technology:

Now the sailors speak. Voices which do not match the faces, jarring slogans. Everything is transposed. Everything is distorted. Where earlier the editing was meaningful, now it is destroyed in favour of actual words. A film document of historic value has been crushed for the benefit of a bogus momentary fad [i.e. sound film].

A barbaric undertaking. Before, there was the revolution over hunger, the foul rations, the maggots in the meat were only the beginning, only the provocation which brought about the eruption of a long pre-existing revolutionary fermentation. Now the sailors speak over and above it, now it has become mundane, dramaturgically over-accentuated and idiotic. A poor copy of a Piscator performance.

(Ihering 1930-08-14; reproduced in Ihering 1961: 310–11)

Meanwhile, Meisel had plenty to keep him occupied. He composed incidental music for Piscator's production of *Des Kaisers Kulis*, a play based on the book by the German war novelist Theodore Plivier, which had its premiere at the end of August. When Münzenberg saw the production, he apparently proposed making it into a film with Meisel's music, to be produced jointly by Prometheus and the Soviet Mezhrabpom company (with which Prometheus had recently merged for reasons of financial stability). The Soviet authorities rejected the proposal, fearing that the play's tendentious third act (in which 'sailors from Kiel hoist red flags on their ships . . . underscored by the frenzied music of Edmund Meisel') would cause difficulties with the German Government (Boeser and Vatková 1986: 7). Meisel also received a further commission from Prometheus to write a score for a Soviet silent film, *Goluboi ekspres* (*The Blue Express*), released in Germany under the title *Der blaue Expreß*.

13 *Der blaue Expresß*

Ilya Trauberg, the younger brother of Leonid (chiefly known for his films with Grigori Kozintsev), had been an assistant director for Eisenstein on *October* (1927/8) and had directed a few documentaries. *Goluboi ekspress* was his debut feature film, based on the second part of a trilogy of Chinese stories by Sergei Tretyakov, the Soviet Futurist poet and playwright. The plot is a melodrama about the colonial powers in China, set in the second half of the 1920s on board the Blue Express train. The action begins with the passengers assembling for departure, segregated into classes of carriage according to the social divisions in China: luxury class for the white Europeans and wealthy Chinese; a priest and intellectuals in the second class; labourers, artisans and sundry peasants in the third class; a wagon carrying armaments; and finally a cattle truck for the Chinese children sold into slavery to work in the silk-weaving factories. The departure of the train is delayed until the arrival of a European adventurer (an arms dealer), whose help is sought by the Chinese General to quell provincial uprisings. An incident onboard whereby a sick young slave girl is violated by an overseer results in the death of a white man, for which many innocent Chinese are massacred in retaliation. This forms the spark which incites those in the third class to take over the train. A last-ditch attempt to derail the train is thwarted by a brave Chinese signalman, who reverses the points just in time, allowing the train to travel freely. Trauberg made his film as a silent (1928–9), due to the lack of sound-film equipment then in the Soviet Union, and the film received its Russian premiere on 20 December 1929 (Leyda 1960: 435).

Jutzi edited the German release for Prometheus, retaining Trauberg's five-act structure. The print submitted to the Berlin censors was already shorter than the original, but some further minor cuts were required to Act IV (such as two scenes showing mutineers being beheaded by a military executioner). The film was

registered on 27 August 1930, but permission was only granted for adult viewing. There was a gap of almost two months between this censorship decision and the Berlin premiere. Despite this length of time, Meisel is reported to have only spent five days on his score, possibly due to pressure of other commitments (K. L. 1930-10-25; Feld 1984: 39). The score is not extant, but a *Film-Kurier* review (1930-10-29) contains vital information regarding the number and disposition of the players. It was written for the Lewis Ruth Band, a jazz band famous for its performances and recordings of Weill's *Der Dreigroschenoper* (1928). Automatically, this creates a very different sound-world from Meisel's scores for *Der heilige Berg*, *Berlin* and *October*, which were all performed by large-scale orchestras, and is in keeping with Meisel's decision to write in a more popular style. Meisel's band comprised thirteen players (many doubling on several instruments), divided into a 'dramatic' orchestra and a 'sound-effects' orchestra:

1. Alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, flute and clarinet
2. Tenor saxophone, clarinet and violin II
3. Alto saxophone, violin I and clarinet
4. Trumpet
5. Trumpet
6. Trombone
7. Sousaphone
8. Percussion
9. Percussion
10. Banjo, guitar, bandoneón and Hawaiian guitar
11. Piano (dramatic orchestra)
12. Piano (sound-effects orchestra)
13. Musical saw

Meisel conducted his score at the premiere on 20 October 1930 in the Mozartsaal, Berlin, to great critical acclaim. The front page of *Lichtbild-Bühne* had the cheeky headline: 'Sensational Discovery: A silent film with orchestra' and described the film as 'the first large-scale silent film after the first six months of one hundred per cent sound projection' (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-10-21). The film was hailed as a successor to the montage techniques and photographic freedom of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, a welcome return to the high art of silent film after the stilted action in the recent spate of mostly American talkies. There were many positive reviews, showing appreciation

for Meisel's new style, praising how he underlined the lyrical and emotional moments of the film and the effective stylizations of his sound effects:

There is a 'new Meisel' who we have known since England. One, who no longer alienates us with noises, but wants to be agreeable to the ear. This style of music is so ideal for silent film. Music and film want to go directly to the brain, the images into fantasy.

Thus the effect of Meisel's music with the Lewis Ruth Band in the Mozartsaal was immediate. It doesn't want to outdo the film, as was often the case before, it wants to fit the film, even polish it, counterbalance it. No gunpowder goes off, no extreme rhythmic cacophony. Instead there is much that is lyrical, where it suits. Meisel wrings out a native song from emotional bass-motifs [the singing saw?], lightly plucks the strings and even attaches soft sounds of transfiguration to the dying. But also with the triumphal march is he to the fore, so spontaneous, so incipiently resplendent, that the audience join in clapping with the film and music at the end. A successful synchronization. The Lewis Ruth Band had a soloist of worth on every desk.

The music alone is worth an evening in the Mozartsaal. (J. 1930-10-21)

Many a sound-film orchestra cannot withstand comparison with the virtuosity of [the Lewis Ruth Band]. Out of his most successful work to date, the *Potemkin* film, Meisel has maintained the sharply accentuated rhythms, without going to extremes. He has become simpler and more original in the invention of his melodic motifs and in his composition reflects not only the horrific incidents, but gives more room to the emotional. The 'singing saw' has a few very effective solos. The parade music is a prime example of the best film composition, which also must appear to be completely synchronous to eyes and ears accustomed to sound film, and which is grandly trumpeted by the Lewis Ruth Band. A pleasure to hear! (sp. 1930-10-22)

[The] stylization [of sound effects] can be more worthwhile and more vivid than so-called 'naturalness' (Meisel's music to *The Blue Express* proved this yesterday). (Lichtbild-Bühne 1930-10-21)

A musical illustration by Edmund Meisel has been added to the film, which clatters along like the train, faithfully underscores each emotion and, on the whole, like the film itself, uses a focussed means of expression.

(Kracauer 1930-10-23; reproduced in Müller-Bach 2004: 408–10)

Each time period requires its own expression. Yesterday it was noise-rhythms, tempo, the motoric; today he works melodically in conjunction with sound effects. And tomorrow, if it is necessary, he will change again.

(*Film-Kurier* 1930-10-29)

Meisel and the Lewis Ruth Band were invited to perform at the Frankfurt premiere; his score was also played on the radio (*Film-Kurier* 1930-10-22).

From silent to sound

Around this time, Meisel paid another visit to London, where he attended one of Charles Cochran's revues. These extravaganzas, held annually at the London Pavilion in the late 1920s and 1930s, featured the famous 'Cochran young ladies' and upbeat numbers by the young American songwriters, Rodgers and Hart, and their English counterparts, Noël Coward and Vivian Ellis. Meisel was enthusiastic about the music he had heard, improvising examples on a grand piano to Piscator, Feld and Feld's wife, on his return (Feld 1984). In November 1930, Meisel and the Lewis Ruth Band recorded the score for *Der blaue Expreß* in a single mammoth fourteen-hour recording session, using a sound-on-disc system (Sudendorf 1984: 32). A photograph taken by Els at the recording studio shows the jazz musicians in performance, whilst an ashen-faced Meisel stands by (reproduced in London 1936: facing 48; also Sudendorf 1984: 32, image erroneously reversed). What happened next was most unexpected: Meisel died around midday on 14 November after an operation for an inflamed appendix. Sudendorf (1984: 32) stated that Meisel fell ill with severe stomach pains shortly after the recording had finished and died the following day as a result of an emergency operation. This account does not tally with the obituaries on the front page of the supplement in *Film-Kurier* (reproduced in Sudendorf 1984: inside back cover), two of which make reference to Meisel having survived the operation for over a week and having discussed his forthcoming work on

Stürme über dem Montblanc whilst recovering (Ej. 1930-11-15; h.f. 1930-11-15).

This would place the recording earlier in November.

Undeterred by Meisel's death, Prometheus placed an advertisement in the press announcing that, even though the synchronized sound film was not yet available, theatre owners wishing to experience the film to its best effect could hire the orchestral music, arranged by Herr Kapellmeister Alfred Schröder, of the Emelka-Palast, Leipzig, from the late Meisel's original music. Schröder and his orchestra were also available for hire on application.¹ It is unclear whether Prometheus ever released the sound version of *Der blaue Expreß* in Germany, but the Film Society were able to obtain the film and its sound discs for a screening on 12 April 1931 at the Phoenix Theatre, London (The Film Society 1972: 184–6). The final disc in the set was missing and a gramophone record of Honegger's *Pacific 231* (*Mouvement Symphonique* No. 1) was used to accompany the fifth reel (FS24f). Honegger had written *Pacific 231* in 1923, based on his original contribution to the score of *La Roue* (score compiled 1922) for the accelerated montage sequences of a train hurtling to its destruction (King 1996: 36–7). *Pacific 231* is scored for a large symphony orchestra and lasts approximately six minutes in performance, so it may have been played more than once to cover the running time of the final reel of *The Blue Express*. Constant Lambert was in the audience and reported that

The place for music of the Honegger type is not the concert hall but the cinema. Those who are bored by *Pacific 231* in the concert hall would have been surprised at the brilliant effect it made when used in conjunction with the Soviet film *The Blue Express*. (Lambert 1948 [1934]: 176)

Meisel's friend and champion, Herring, hailed it as his 'last and best music' (R. H. 1931-04-13).

The rapidly changing political climate in Germany may well have prevented or at least restricted the dissemination of *Der blaue Expreß* in either its silent or sound

¹ From an undated and unattributed press cutting in the press file for *Der blaue Expreß* in the Schriftgutarchiv, Deutsche-Kinemathek, Berlin.

versions. On 9 December 1930, Hitler's Nazi party, the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, called for government sanctions against the damaging influx of foreign films on the morals of the German folk and the honour of German women. A list of the most suspect foreign films – many of which had been censored several times or had been banned by local police – was cited as supporting evidence. The list included *Potemkin*, *Zehn Tage* and *Der blaue Expreß* (Barbian 1993: 68–9). Ultimately *Der blaue Expreß* was banned in 1933 (see Appendix II), along with many other films distributed or produced by Prometheus which were considered to be tendentious.

Meisel's sound discs are not known to have survived, but his recording session has survived via other means. Abel Gance, although not a committed Marxist or fellow-traveller, was attracted as a pacifist and internationalist to Soviet cinematic art and endeavoured to screen several Soviet silent films, including *Goluboi ekspress*.

Early in 1931 he set up

a company for the release in France of Soviet films (in return for which Gance would be provided with facilities in the Soviet Union for the making of *1812* [another film in his *Napoleon* series]. . .). Although it was criticised for the condition of the prints it circulated, the company did have a degree of success and was responsible for the introduction into France of a number of previously unknown Soviet films. *1812*, of course, was never made . . . (King 1984: 165)

As was to be expected, the French censorship authorities insisted on drastic cuts before the Soviet films could be shown. Gance released *Der blaue Expreß* in France under the title *Le Train mongol*, transferring the film and discs onto a sound-on-film process. A copy still exists in the Cinémathèque Française, Paris, with a running time of approximately 60 minutes. Transferring the soundtrack from discs to film has at least saved it for posterity, allowing some aural analysis, but the film itself has not been restored.

Analysis

Gance was personally criticized by Léon Moussinac, both for his blatant self-promotion in the opening credits of *Le Train mongol* (which read ‘Sous la direction artistique de M. Abel Gance’) and over his additional tampering, declaring that ‘Soviet cinema mutilated by censorship and artistically disfigured by Mr Abel Gance is no longer Soviet cinema. The scandal has gone on long enough!’ (Moussinac 1932-03-04). Some of Gance’s ‘tampering’ is obvious from awkward aural cuts, particularly towards the end of the film during skirmishes on top of the train. It is to be hoped that Gance did not alter the order of Meisel’s recorded score, but he did reshape the film into three approximately equal parts, the second part beginning shortly after the opening of Act II and ending near the beginning of Act IV in the Jutzi version. The opening credits state that Gance’s company was La Société d’Expansion Cinématographique and the sound system used was the Société Organon de la Polyphone-Gramophone, the Paris branch of the company employed for various Prometheus sound films, including the 1930 version of *Potemkin* and *Die kleine Schraube*, which list ‘Organon im Polyphon-Grammophon-Konzern’ on their registration cards.

Trauberg’s film is full of stereotypes and clichés that would be easily recognizable in Hollywood: the cultural differences between East and West, the social divisions between the oppressed and the oppressors, and so on. Trauberg was a fan of American films and had written books on D. W. Griffith and William S. Hart, one of the first stars of the western film genre (Taylor and Christie 1994: 444). It is therefore appropriate that the closing scenes of *Le Train mongol* – where a group of people are in an extreme dramatic situation which is only resolved at the last minute – have been compared to a western (Hanisch 1974: 141–2). The film begins with a series of vignettes, contrasting the three character types in the film: inert peasants, passively waiting on the platform with their meagre possessions until the train

arrives; the Chinese militia, reliant on the Europeans to aid them in their suppression of the peasants; and the Europeans, whose life seems to be all about luxury and leisure. Until the train departs, there is a regular change of scene between different areas of the platform, the engine cab and the station forecourt, to allow different threads of the story to be introduced. Subsequently there are fewer such vignettes and the camera increasingly switches between different parts of the train to convey a sense of simultaneous action, showing the cause of the mutiny and its consequences throughout the train. The majority of the intertitles convey direct speech rather than information about plot or setting, but this division is not consistently reflected in Meisel's score.

The manner in which Meisel responded to Trauberg's film is similar to how one might compile a score from an accompaniment manual with sections categorised by geographical location, nationality and mood, the selected thematic material repeated in a predictable manner for scenes of a similar nature or recurrences of characters. Some of Meisel's repetitions may have been due to the short time in which he allegedly composed the score. Where possible, Meisel matches Trauberg's parallel action by a more rapid exchange of thematic material. Unsurprisingly, there is clichéd chinoiserie for the Chinese, up-to-date American music for the sophisticated Europeans, comic music for comic characters and situations, temporal contrasts between lyrical vignettes, and the 'hurries' or *agitatos* needed for the fights between the mutineers and their oppressors. The most original parts of Meisel's score are his train simulations. These are flexible mixtures of lyrical and kinetic elements, blended with sound effects, and are discussed below.

Meisel's change of style is mentioned in a succinct critical account of his score, given as a postscript to a contemporaneous review of the silent film premiere in Berlin:

Rumour has it that Edmund Meisel only worked on this illustration-music for five days. That would indeed be a remarkable achievement and hardly appears

possible. Admittedly the music is extremely simple, almost primitive, but it achieves what it wants to, and is capable of underscoring the crescendo of the images and maintaining tempo.

Thankfully Meisel has left behind his solely noise music (as in 'Berlin'). He writes clearly and tonally; the setting gives him opportunities for Chinoiserie, which he employs with care and tact. This music is no masterpiece and how could it have been with so little time at his disposal. However it completely fulfils its purpose and that is enough. (K. L. 1930-10-25)

As in his previous scores, Meisel's themes are in simple four-square rhythmic units and each idea finishes, often with a full cadence, before another one begins. Military rhythms are still employed where appropriate to the plot, but the relentless dissonance has disappeared.

Due to the poor condition of the soundtrack on the surviving print, it is often difficult to detect which instruments are playing at any one time, even solo instruments. The instrumentation in the themes below, transcribed from the soundtrack, is therefore only a suggestion, based on the list in the *Film-Kurier* article from 29 October 1930. One instrument not mentioned in this article but identifiable on the soundtrack is a piccolo, presumably also played by the first player in the list.

The chinoiserie immediately manifests itself in a short pentatonic brass fanfare, positioning the exotic location in a manner similar to the opening of Steiner's score for *King Kong*. Before the mutiny, the peasants are portrayed as inert and passive through slow, gentle melodies suggestive of the pentatonic scale (if not always strictly pentatonic), often with minimal accompaniment. Occasionally, some of the jazz-band instruments simulate authentic Chinese instruments: the Hawaiian guitar substituting for a zither or the musical saw for the Chinese arhu (fiddle), the latter heard in diegetic and non-diegetic situations. All this helps the audience to sympathize with the plight of the oppressed workers and to support them once the mutiny begins, when their thematic material becomes faster and more militant. Below, in Figure 13.1, is the main theme associated with the mutineers once they decide to take action against their oppressors.

he tells the fireman about the flood which had destroyed their rice crop, the ensuing famine and death of their parents. This trombone melody recurs frequently, either for the brother (when it is sorrowful), or as a more militant ‘call to action’ for the leader of the mutiny.

13.2 The fireman asks about his parents (*Le Train mongol, Part 1*)

[Fireman] [Brother]

Slow **Slower**

Solo vln. *Cl.* *Trmb.*

Comment va mon père? Et ma mère? Les choses vont mal chez nous . . .
 Was ist mit Vater? Was ist mit Mutter? Schlecht steht es in der Heimat.

L'inondation a tout dévasté. Pas de riz cette année! . . . Nous aurons faim . . .
 Der Fluß hat das Land überschwemmt. Kein Reis da . . . wir hungern.

Elsewhere, Meisel employed a muted trumpet or trombone as a substitute for the male voice in more comic situations: for example, a raucous squawking for an irate first-class passenger, demanding to know when the train would leave, or mimicking the drunken overseer.

The second example is from the end of Part I when the arms dealer walks down the platform, stopping to pick up a small Chinese boy in his path. The General signals to the waiting brass band to begin their welcome march. As the march begins, the arms dealer puts down the boy and walks towards the General. Meisel begins with a fanfare theme (letter ‘A’ in Figure 13.3) associated with law and order (Chinese soldiers, military police, or the General himself). This theme reaches a cadence and a new unique theme played on flute and glockenspiel is introduced for the brief encounter with the boy (letter ‘B’ in Figure 13.3). A brief reprise of the fanfare theme then leads directly into the march, as he puts the child down (letter ‘C’ in Figure 13.3).

13.3 The arms dealer walks down the platform (*Le Train mongol*, Part 1)

A Brisk
Tpt.

B *Fl., Glock.*

C Quick march
Cl., Sax., Tpt.

etc.

Sound effects

The general 'spotting' of sound effects is quite selective, coinciding with images of objects and events which typically emit a single sound. Examples include train whistles, guards' whistles and gunshots, and a wooden crate crashing to the floor. Some sound effects are deliberately comical, where the action is caught in the manner of vaudeville drummers: for example, every bump and thud during the haphazard parking when the mystery arms dealer arrives at the front of the station, or the punch directed at the peasant who had left his rickshaw in the way. The Chinese official who struck him looks with regret at his bloodied glove to a mocking descending chromatic scale, a gesture often found in Carl Stalling's scores for Warner Bros. cartoons. More 'cartoon' onomatopoeic music illustrates the spinning wheels of the silk factory (where the Chinese fireman's siblings are headed) and a brief series of flashbacks, in which the fireman's brother relates how he had been forced to undertake hard labour. He is duly shown breaking rocks, pulling rickshaws and carrying heavy sacks on his back. The three tasks have contrasting slow-fast-slow tempi: the outer sections are characterised by percussive 'thuds' for every hammer blow and heavy sack, whilst the brother's running feet as he pulls the rickshaws are imitated by a rapid beating on a woodblock. Part of the reason these moments sound like American cartoon and comedy-film accompaniments is that they had similar instrumental forces: an expanded jazz band rather than a cut-down symphony orchestra. More impressive are Meisel's extended sound effects associated with the steam train, ranging from hissing steam as the train reposes, through the sound of gushing water as the fireman fills the train's water tank and culminating in a full-blown simulation of the train departing the station and accelerating to full speed.

Musical simulations of steam trains

Musical portrayal of steam trains in the early 1930s tended either towards novelty numbers with stylized train rhythms, hissing steam and 'choo-who' noises, or more

sophisticated impressions of trains through programmatic music.² Examples of the former are Jeanette MacDonald's song 'Beyond the Blue Horizon' in the musical *Monte Carlo* (dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1930; music by W. Franke Harling and others), and the opening scene from *Zéro de conduite* (dir. Jean Vigo, 1933; score by Maurice Jaubert) when the boys are returning to their boarding school. The most famous portrayal of a train through music is Honegger's *Pacific 231*. In the preface to the score, the composer stated that his intention was

not the imitation of locomotive noises, but the translation of a visual impression and a physical delight through a musical construction. It is based on objective contemplation: the tranquil breathing of the machine in repose, the effort of getting up steam, then the gradual picking up of speed, culminating in the lyrical, engrossing vision of a train weighing 300 tons hurtling through the night at 75 miles an hour. (translated in Halbreich 1999: 351)

One of the ways Honegger achieved his 'translation' of a train in varying states was through the manipulation of rhythm, creating effects of acceleration and deceleration through metric modulation (Halbreich 1999: 351). Benjamin Britten's score to *Night Mail* (dir. Harry Watt and Basil Wright, 1936) is in a similarly impressionistic vein, but is more similar to Meisel's simulation with regard to its reduced instrumental forces and use of sound-emitting objects (including sandpaper and a wind machine) more typical of radio plays and backstage effects.

An obvious solution in sound film was to incorporate field recordings of 'real' train sounds on the soundtrack made in the studio. For example, 'Beyond the Blue Horizon' in *Monte Carlo* is followed immediately by the clangs of a (distinctly American-sounding) train arriving at the fashionable French Riviera resort.

Similarly, the British drama *The Flying Scotsman* (dir. Castleton Knight, 1930; music by John Reynders and Idris Lewis) contains many scenes with realistic sound effects

² Some of this material was presented in my paper, 'Mutiny on a Chinese Train: Composed sound effects in Edmund Meisel's score for Ilya Trauberg's film *The Blue Express*', given at the 42nd Annual RMA Conference, *Music and Visual Cultures*, held in The University of Nottingham, 11–14 July 2006.

for the eponymous train arriving and departing from King's Cross Station and travelling at full speed. Incidentally, *The Flying Scotsman* is more similar to *Der blaue Expreß* in terms of setting (most of the action is on board the train) and production history: it also started out as a silent in 1929, but was then post-synchronized the following year with music, sound effects and new dialogue scenes. It is unlikely that the train sounds used in all early sound films were merely recordings of real trains, because playback fidelity was still relatively poor. Here, for example, was the solution used during the post-synchronization of an American drama, *The Cop* (dir. Donald Crisp, 1928):

Littleton³ arranged to photograph the actual sound of the engine-wheels on the track. The result was a deafening roar. After experimenting with many things, they got a perfect reproduction by tying an iron pipe to a roller skate and dragging it across the bare floor. (*Bioscope* 1929-02-20)

This example shows that sound effects were always 'composed' to varying degrees, as was the case for some of the industrial sounds replicated in *Coal Face* (dir. Cavalcanti, 1935; score by Britten).

Meisel's train simulations are less sophisticated than Honegger's; the acceleration and deceleration is controlled entirely by the conductor's baton, rather than via pre-calculated mathematically related temporal changes. His score contains both impressionistic and more realistic train simulations, the former recurring in the manner of leitmotifs. Meisel may well have drawn on previous material from his Deutsche Grammophon sound effects discs from 1928, one of which simulated a train and typical station noises (including dialogue from the 'passengers' on the platform). The main theme associated with the train in *Der blaue Expreß* is introduced as the train approaches the station (Figure 13.4). It consists of a simple (mostly) pentatonic figuration which gradually slows down, grinding to a halt with a rising chromatic pattern.

³ Scott Littleton, director of sound effects at PDC Studios, Culver City, California.

13.4 Train approaching station (*Le Train mongol, Part 1*)

Quick
Sax.

ritard.

This theme is reused on multiple occasions with varied orchestration and chugging ‘train noises’ added by the percussion. An illusion of increased speed is achieved simply by rhythmic subdivision and flute flourishes, which also reflect the increased dramatic tension as the mutiny takes hold. The second impressionistic train simulation is more of a jazz novelty number and represents the train hurtling out of control, thanks to the ineptitude of the arms dealer’s assistant who, having killed the engine driver, inadvertently made the train accelerate rather than stop. Again there are audible train noises and chugging rhythms played in conjunction with this theme. Occasionally it is possible to make out a banjo strumming underneath on the offbeats and most of the time the noise sources appear to emanate from standard percussion instruments and traps. This theme recurs several times in quick succession at the end of the film, alternating with themes associated with the mutineers (Figure 13.1 and the ‘Call to Action’ theme mentioned above), but with little apparent change apart from increasing tempo.

The most effective train simulation occurs in the first part of the film when the train departs. As discussed above, a march accompanied the arms dealer as he walked down the platform and greeted the Chinese general. The march consists of two themes connected via a comic ‘oompah’ interlude. Whilst the first theme is similar to the Bagley original, Meisel appears to have invented the second one. The march is repeated until the train is ready to depart, at which point Meisel’s use of two independent orchestras – one orchestra playing the march, the other simulating the

train – becomes most obvious. The separation of the orchestras begins innocently, growing out of the rhythms of the second ‘oompah’ interlude, but altered to sound like the ‘chuffing’ of a departing train. The ‘train’ is joined by the second theme of the march, but the ‘train’ accelerates independently. When the ‘train’ is at full speed, the main theme of the march returns, at approximately its original speed, but it appears faster because of the now rapid train noises. The train noises become louder than the march, in an attempt to show a changing aural perspective, but the march continues to be audible long after the visual stimulus of the military band has been left behind. This seems rather bizarre, especially since Meisel was happy to change thematic material so frequently elsewhere in the score. The ‘dramatic’ orchestra’s final reprise of the march theme is eventually curtailed, leaving only the ‘sound-effects’ orchestra as the train goes off into the night. Reducing the volume of the march almost immediately the train had started and curtailing it sooner would have been more realistic. Nonetheless, Hunter found the ‘visual sound’ in Meisel’s onomatopoeic train simulations most effective, since ‘[t]he real noise of a moving train is not necessarily as fitting as the suggestion of that noise’ (Hunter 1932: 53).

Echoes of *Potemkin*

Shortly after returning to Berlin, Meisel had told the press that his experience of sound films in London had ‘taught me to reserve the characteristic “Meisel-Music” – so called by my critics – for the dramatic highpoints in sound films’ (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-02-22). He was referring specifically to the rising sequence at the end of *Potemkin*. The sequence is successful in *Potemkin* due to the positioning of the scene at the very end of the film, the length of the ‘tension’ music (it is repeated for several minutes) and its resolution (both dramatic and musical). At several points in *Le Train mongol*, Meisel uses a short chromatic rising sequence to introduce a series of ‘agitato’ ideas underscoring dramatic flashpoints, such as the mutineers overpowering the overseers. There is also a longer unison example for scenes of soldiers and

mutineers fighting on the train roof while, down below, panic spreads amongst the passengers and the train accelerates out of control. Only one rising sequence has the same positioning and resolution (and arguably the same impact) as at the end of *Potemkin*, but which, stylistically, is more in keeping with Meisel's new melodic approach. For the very end of the film, when the wounded signalman reaches the points in time to save the train, there is a more melodic rising sequence played on a muted trombone (Figure 13.5), based on the opening motif from the Mutineer's theme (Figure 13.1). The melodic rising sequence mirrors the signalman's ascent up the steep embankment and also the mounting hope that the train will ride on to freedom; when it does the tension is resolved musically by a grand reprise of the Mutineers' theme.

13.5 Chinese signalman (*Le Train mongol*, end of Part 3)



Berlin Postscript: Unfinished business

Having shot his silent footage for *Stürme über dem Montblanc* by the end of August 1930, Fanck set about editing, the plan being to post-synchronize the film in a studio with sound effects, Meisel's music, and additional dialogue scenes (Schöning 1997: 241–2). Meisel's work on the score was left unfinished when he died. The post-synchronization went ahead with another composer and had premieres in Dresden and Frankfurt on 25 December 1930, before the Berlin premiere on 2 February 1931 (Klaus 1988: 154–5). Here is allegedly what happened:

When this film began, Edmund Meisel was proposed for the composition.

Whilst the footage – shot long ago – was being edited by Dr. Fanck, Meisel

died. The composition was handed over to [Paul] Dessau: he had to prepare it in 14 days.

It has been rumoured many times that Meisel's sketches formed the basis of Dessau's music or at least were incorporated. Neither of these is correct. Dessau carried over not one single note belonging to Meisel. And that was a good thing: a musician of Dessau's status needs no borrowings.

It is reported that, before his death, Meisel had the idea to use a jazz band for the music to *Montblanc* in the same style as for *Der blaue Expreß*.

Inconceivable, for such a film . . . (London 1931-02-07)

Ultimately, the soundtrack did incorporate a jazz number written by Meisel and performed by the Lewis Ruth Band (Klaus 1988: 154–5). This ten-second extract appears as a diegetic radio broadcast, external to Dessau's score, during the scene when Hella Armstrong (played by Riefenstahl) and her father (an astronomer) visit the weather station base camp on Montblanc. *Stürme über dem Montblanc* was voted one of the top ten films of 1930/31 in a poll of German cinema audiences (Garncarz 1993: 198–9), an accolade Meisel's films never achieved, not even in the notorious days of *Potemkin* back in 1926.

Meisel's widow, Els, emigrated to London during the Hitler regime. Ivor Montagu's papers contain a file of correspondence between himself and Els, spanning the period November 1939 to January 1940 (IM116a). Els asked Montagu to help her trace a copy of her husband's *Potemkin* score that had allegedly been sent to Moscow, so that she could generate some income via proposed performances in America. Although Montagu assured her that he was doing everything to help and contacted the Russian Embassy on her behalf, his attempts cannot have amounted to anything. She also wanted a loan from Bernstein, since he was supposed to have the only surviving copy of the *Ten Days (October)* score. Els only survived a few more years, dying in London in 1944 (Sudendorf 1984: 5). Such a premature death was an all too familiar story for those fleeing the perils of Nazi Germany: Carl Mayer, the scriptwriter behind Ruttman's *Berlin* film, died in London that same year, the victim of poverty and pancreatic cancer (Mayr 2008: 201).

Conclusion: Pioneer or Upstart?

Meisel was subjected to extensive personal criticism in the reviews of *Berlin* and *October*, culminating in the long legal dispute with Pringsheim. The composer became stuck in an artistic impasse, simultaneously fêted in some quarters of the commercial film world for his bold experiments, whilst being damned by the serious artistic community of Berlin. This is illustrated by Strobel's indictment that 'Only the film industry looks upon Edmund Meisel . . . as a creative modern composer' (Strobel 1928-07: 346). If Meisel's works are compared with those by the 'accepted' composers in Berlin (Eisler and Weill, for example), then many of the criticisms levelled at Meisel's compositional prowess and general musicianship are justifiable. Meisel's formal musical education was limited and probably ended before he turned eighteen, the point at which serious study of composition and formal techniques generally began. Instead, Meisel used the experience he had gained as a performer and conductor, approaching composition for stage and screen in a spontaneous, improvisatory manner, unfettered by extensive training in the composition of autonomous music. This helps to explain why Strobel and his circle were so outraged that Meisel had achieved such a level of fame and notoriety as a composer.

Meisel's limited musical background is not unusual within the wider history of film music. There are many film composers, from Charlie Chaplin to Danny Elfman in the present day, who have lacked formal music training and required assistance with matters ranging from basic notation to orchestration. Within this spectrum, Meisel was actually quite accomplished and appears to have orchestrated at least some if not all of his scores. It cannot be denied that many of these composers with minimal formal training, Meisel included, have a tendency to produce scores tailored closely to the requirements of the drama. Critics might argue that a lack of training prohibits composing in any other way, and that what results tends to lack the

structural cohesion expected in concert music. Nonetheless, such composers have helped to enshrine many narrative scoring techniques – stemming from nineteenth-century programmatic music (and earlier) – in our collective conscience, through their continued use in silent-film accompaniments and early sound films. Moreover, the use of narrative scoring techniques has multiplied exponentially in the modern multi-media environment, with music playing a prominent role in the presentation and marketability of a diverse range of visual media, from the proliferation of wildlife and scientific documentaries to computer games.

Initially, Meisel developed a style founded on dissonance and hammering rhythms, which probably emanated from his incidental music for Piscator's agitprop productions. *Berlin*, rather than *October*, was the height of his prowess in this vein, his experiments with atonality and noise-music enhanced through spatial separation of certain groups of instruments to surround the audience with sound and create different auditory perspectives. Meisel had begun with a modest salon orchestra for *Potemkin*, but the success of this accompaniment led to many of his subsequent scores being performed by large orchestras at gala premieres in Berlin's first-run film palaces. For *Berlin* and *October*, if not also *Überflüssige Menschen* and *Der heilige Berg*, these orchestras were amongst the largest assembled to accompany film premieres in Berlin during the 1920s and were comparable to those conducted by Rapée during his tenure at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo. For a while at least, Meisel was obsessed with the sheer scale and volume a large orchestra could produce, especially one strengthened by extra percussion.

Meisel was used to much smaller instrumental forces for his stage work: a photograph on the front cover of Sudendorf's monograph shows a performance of *Rasputin* (November 1927), where the composer and fewer than a dozen musicians are crammed into a box at the side of the auditorium. His first experiments with recorded sound were made by his stage ensemble for *Schwejk* (January 1928). Once he began his sound-film work, Meisel abandoned previous demands for a large

orchestra, reverting to an ensemble of around two dozen players or fewer (at least from *The Crimson Circle* onwards). Meisel had immediately grasped that it was unnecessary (and impracticable due to issues of cost and studio space) to use a traditional orchestra in sound film. Although his work in London did not prove to be successful or highly productive, Meisel was profoundly influenced by his encounter with the popular style emanating from London's stage shows and from the sound films on exhibition across the capital. He estimated that he had seen over 200 sound films during his stay (*Lichtbild-Bühne* 1930-02-22). On his return to Berlin, he switched to a more melodious style and the flexibility of a jazz band (the Lewis Ruth Band) for his new scores, as demonstrated in *Die Kleine Schraube* and *Der blaue Expreß*. His unfinished score to *Stürme über dem Montblanc* was also intended for this ensemble.

Throughout his career, Meisel maintained that the primary function of film music was to reinforce the action. He never wavered from this belief, regardless of his various outward changes in style, size of ensemble, or whether he was writing for live performance or recorded sound. Whilst his scoring techniques were not unique during the silent and early sound eras, Meisel went much further than many of his contemporaries in his attempts to illustrate the film drama. His silent-film scores require a significant degree of detailed synchronization that is still difficult to achieve today in live performance, despite technological advances. As this thesis has demonstrated, Meisel's original scores incorporated borrowed material (often for specific diegetic purposes), sound-effects, and eventually dialogue in a manner which prefigures the modern integrated soundtrack. Evaluated within the history of film music, this unquestionably marks Meisel out as a pioneer.

Whilst this thesis has done much to assess and promote the importance of Meisel's film scores, there are still opportunities for further research. The biographical data regarding Meisel is limited. More intensive investigations in Germany, chiefly in Berlin, might illuminate Meisel's early musical career as a

violinist and composer, his whereabouts and activities during World War I, and his work with Piscator. Another interesting avenue would be to examine which American and British sound films were shown during Meisel's stay in London, particularly those mentioned in the composer's letters and articles (for example, see *Film-Kurier* 1930-01-15). From those early sound films which are still extant (probably in American film archives), it may be possible to trace more specific roots for Meisel's change to a more melodious style in 1930. There is also the possibility that there are many more substantial materials awaiting discovery. The following artefacts may still be extant: the conducting scores and orchestral parts to all of Meisel's silent-film premieres; the score, sound discs and film print for *Deutsche Rundfunk*; the scripts, scores and sound discs for the work Meisel carried out in London; the score relating to the sound-version of *Potemkin*; and the original sound discs for *Der blaue Expresß*.

If sufficient funding were to become available, I would make two proposals. The first would be to restore the print and soundtrack of *Le Train mongol* for cinema and commercial release. This is a neglected masterpiece of Soviet montage and deserves a wider audience. Moreover, it is currently the only significant illustration of Meisel's change of style in 1930. Secondly, it would be most desirable for film-music scholars and many other interested parties (for example those whose primary focus is the associated films or directors) to have easy access to Meisel's extant piano scores. Whilst the creation of published, critical editions of film scores may initially sound appealing, it may be more practicable and affordable to digitize the scores. It would be better still if these digitized scores were also coupled with relevant film prints and score reconstructions in multi-media resources, as suggested by Winters (2007: 139–40). This would facilitate instantaneous demonstration of audio-visual relationships. The digitization of the *Potemkin* score should be the first priority and would complement Patalas's digitally re-created 'Jutzi' print from 1926 with Meisel's score reconstructed by Imig (Patalas 2005: 40). Meisel's *Berlin* score would also be

an ideal vehicle for a multi-media resource, since, out of all of Meisel's scores, this one most closely resembles the content and scene order in the surviving film prints (Goergen 1987-04-26; Goslar 2007). The issue of funding is not the only obstacle to making Meisel's scores more accessible. Ultimately it is to be hoped that the (primarily German) film archives are able to resolve issues regarding copyright and allay long-standing fears that allowing increased access to their holdings will lead to undesirable parties generating commercial gains, from which the film archives are unable to benefit.

Appendices

I Selected reconstructions

Bronenosets Potyomkin/Panzerkreuzer Potemkin/Battleship Potemkin

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces/conductor	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
Arthur Kleiner	MOMA print	Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Kleiner	24 March 1972	Broadcast in the PBS 'Film Odyssey' series, Channel 26, produced by KCET TV, Los Angeles (Kriegsman 1972-03-24; Arthur Kleiner to Lord Bernstein, New York, 17 January 1976 [IM116])
			6 December 1974	Broadcast on BBC2 (<i>Radio Times</i> 1974-11-30)
			22 January 1978	Broadcast on ZDF (Tode 2003: 38)
Alan Fearon	Print sourced from BFI; specially re-subtitled (Driscoll 1987-11-16)	Het Brabants Orkest, Holland, conducted by Alan Fearon	April 1986	's-Hertogenbosch, Amsterdam; tour of eight further Dutch towns in 1986
			20 November 1987	The Corn Exchange, Cambridge (British premiere) (BFI 1987: 7)
			21 November 1987	Queen Elizabeth Hall, London (London Film Festival). Two performances
			22 November 1987	St David's Hall, Cardiff
			23 November 1987	York Film Theatre, University of York

Bronenosets Potyomkin/Panzerkreuzer Potemkin/Battleship Potemkin (continued)

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces/conductor	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
Alan Fearon		Northern Sinfonia conducted by Alan Fearon	21 October 1990	The Tyne Theatre and Opera House, Newcastle Closing gala presentation at 13 th Tyneside International Film Festival (<i>Guardian</i> 1990-10-20)
Mark Andreas	Restoration by Enno Patalas and Lothar Prox, the so-called 'Munich' print 1341 metres; 74 minutes at 16 fps (Tode 2003: 38)	Orchestra della Radiotelevisione della Svizzera Italiana, conducted by Mark Andreas	1986	Broadcast on Schweizer Fernsehen and Bayerischer Rundfunk (Tode 2003: 38)
		Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, conducted by David Shallon	20 September 1986	Köln, Philharmonie; further performances that month in Frankfurt, Munich, Strasbourg and Witten (Junge Deutsche Philharmonie 1986)
		Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, conducted by Mark Andreas	8–10 April 1987 (recording) Released 1995	Edmund Meisel, <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> and <i>The Holy Mountain</i> , conducted by Mark Andreas & Helmut Imig 2-CD set edel 0029062EDL
		Südwestfälische Philharmonie, conducted by Mark Andreas	September 1990	Schauspielhaus, Düsseldorf (review in Gorkow 1990-09-18)

Bronenosets Potyomkin/Panzerkreuzer Potemkin/Battleship Potemkin (continued)

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces/conductor	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
Helmut Imig	New restoration by Enno Patalas, the so-called 'Berlin' print; length 1388 metres / approximately 70 minutes at 18 fps (Bohn 2005)	45 players from the Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg, conducted by Imig	12 & 13 February 2005	Live performances at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz during the 55 th Berlinale
		55 players from the Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg, conducted by Imig (Patalas 2005: 40)	2007	<i>Panzerkreuzer Potemkin: Das Jahr 1905</i> (Transit Classics – Deluxe Edition 86970099149, 2007)
			2007	<i>Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin</i> (Kino International; K558, 2007)
Helmut Imig	Digital reconstruction of 1926 Berlin premiere ('Jutzi' or 'Weimar') version by Enno Patalas	30 players from the Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg, conducted by Imig	Completed as part of the 2005 reconstruction (Patalas 2005: 40)	
[Meisel's original sound discs from 1930]	Digital reconstruction of 1930 sound release with synchronized image and sound; a Berlin University of the Arts project, led by Enno Patalas (Patalas 2005: 40)	Conducted by Meisel	February 2012	To be screened at the 62nd Berlinale

Der heilige Berg

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
Helmut Imig		Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, conducted by Imig	10 October 1990 (recording) Released 1995	Edmund Meisel, <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> and <i>The Holy Mountain</i> , conducted by Mark Andreas & Helmut Imig 2-CD set edel 0029062EDL
	Restored tinted print, 2001; Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin, the Fondazione Cineteca Italiana, Milano, and the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Stiftung, Wiesbaden	Orchestra Haydn di Bolzano e Trento, conducted by Imig	30 April 2010	58 th Mountain Film Festival, Trento, Italy (Imig 2010)

Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
Arthur Kleiner		2 pianos & percussion	26 April 1975	Broadcast for Norddeutscher Rundfunk in Hamburg (Prox 1979: 30)
Günther Becker (Acts 1–4) Emil Gerhardt (Act V)		2 pianos & percussion (1 player) conducted by Joachim Herbold	February 1982	32nd Berlinale, 12–23 February 1982 (Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin 1982)
		2 pianos & percussion (2 players) conducted by Joachim Herbold	12 September 1982	Mozart Saal, Frankfurt, Frankfurt Festival (Deutsches Filmmuseum 1982)
		2 pianos & percussion conducted by Frank Strobel	December 1987	Mozart Saal, Frankfurt, Ruttmann centenary presentation (Deutsches Filmmuseum 1987)
Mark Andreas (Schlingensiepen 2011)	Koblenz State Archive	RIAS-Jugendorchester and three brass bands, conducted by Mark Andreas (Goergen 1987-04-26)	30 April 1987	Act III performed at the opening ceremony of the 750 th Anniversary of Berlin at the ICC
			17 July 1987	Waldbühne, Berlin City Festival presentation (in full)
		16 players (Schlingensiepen 2011)	1990	

Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt (continued)

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
Helmut Imig (Imig 2011)		Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg, conducted by Imig	7 March 2004	Dessau
			21 April 2005	Neu Brandenburg
		2 pianos and percussion (2 players) conducted by Imig	3 November 2007	New York, Carnegie Hall
			5 July 2008	Berlin, St. Michaels-Heim
			4 September 2009	Berlin, Technisches Museum
			7 March 2010	Viersen, Stadthalle
Bernd Thewes	Restored from a negative held by the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, and act titles taken from a positive returned by the Library of Congress in 1980	Rundfunk- Sinfonieorchester Berlin + jazz-combo, conducted by Frank Strobel	24 September 2007	Friedrichstadtpalast, Berlin 80 th Jubilee performance
			30 November 2007	Broadcast on ZDF/ARTE
			2008	<i>Walther Ruttmann: Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt & Melodie der Welt</i> , 2-disc DVD with ROM section), Edition filmmuseum 39, 2008

Oktyabr’/Oktober/Zehn Tage die die Welt erschütterten

Restoration/ Arrangement by	Film print details	Instrumental forces	Date	Live performances, recordings and broadcasts
David Kershaw	Variant of Alexandrov restoration	York University Orchestra	November 1979	York Film Theatre (University of York Department of Music 1979)
Alan Fearon, based on materials provided by David Kershaw	BFI print combined with another from Moscow (Christie 1988)	Northern Sinfonia conducted by Alan Fearon	7 November 1988	Newcastle City Hall (Northern Sinfonia 1988-09-20)
			8 November 1988	The Corn Exchange, Cambridge
			13 November 1988	Odeon, Leicester Square, London Film Festival (Malcolm 1988-11-03)
			25–7 July 1989	Cour d’Honneur du Palais des Papes, Festival d’Avignon (Drillon 1989-07-06)
			21 December 1992 (recorded in 1988)	Broadcast on UK’s Channel 4 TV (<i>TV Times</i> 1992-12-19)
		Het Brabants Orkest conducted by Alan Fearon	14 October 1989	Schouwburg Casino, Den Bosch
		15 October 1989	Vredenburg, Utrecht (press cutting from Fearon’s personal papers)	
Bernd Thewes	New composite print with improved photographic quality, using prints in Filmmuseum München and Gosfilmofond material	unknown	February 2012	To be screened at the 62 nd Berlinale

II A summary of censorship decisions for Meisel's films

Key:

BARCH: Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin (Federal Film Archive)

DKB: Deutsche-Kinemathek, Berlin

DIF: Deutsches-Filminstitut, Frankfurt

FPB: Film-Prüfstelle, Berlin (Censorship Office, Berlin)

FOP: Film-Oberprüfstelle, Berlin (Censorship Headquarters, Berlin)

German title	Examined by	Examination Number (Prüfung-Nummer)	Date	Length at submission (in metres)	Length after cuts (in metres)	Decision	Sources
<i>Das Jahr 1905</i> (<i>Panzerkreuzer „Potemkin“</i>)	FPB	12595	24 March 1926	1617	1617	Banned	Herlinghaus (1960: 249–50, document 1)
	FOP	349	10 April 1926			Decision from 24 March 1926 rescinded, subject to revisions	Herlinghaus (1960: 255–61, document 6)
	FPB	12595	10 April 1926	1617	1586.85	Permitted (adults only) after 30.15m cuts	Reproduced in Junge Deutsche Philharmonie (1986: 11–18)
	FOP	581	12 July 1926	1586.85	1586.85	Permission revoked	Herlinghaus (1960: 305–7, document 38)

German title	Examined by	Examination Number (Prüfung-Nummer)	Date	Length at submission (in metres)	Length after cuts (in metres)	Decision	Sources
Das Jahr 1905 (Panzerkreuzer „Potemkin“) (continued)	FPB	13346	28 July 1926	1421	1421	Permitted	Bezerra (2003)
	FPB	13418	6 August 1926	83 (trailer)	83	Permitted	Bezerra (2003)
	FOP	801	2 October 1926	1421	1421	Full permission revoked; now only permitted for adults	Herlinghaus (1960: 325–7, document 52)
	FPB	19166	5 June 1928	1469	1464.45	Permitted (adults only) after 4.55m cuts	Bezerra (2003)
Panzerkreuzer Potemkin (sound version)	FPB	26505	1 August 1930	1353	1353	Permitted (adults only); includes same revisions made from FPB 19166	Bezerra (2003)
	FPB		1 August 1930	84 (trailer, sound)			Meier (1962b: 179)
<i>Das Jahr 1905</i> (Panzerkreuzer „Potemkin“) (silent and sound versions)	FOP	6363	23 March 1933			Banned	Bezerra (2003)

German title	Examined by	Examination Number (Prüfung-Nummer)	Date	Length at submission (in metres)	Length after cuts (in metres)	Decision	Sources
<i>Überflüssige Menschen</i>	FPB	13994	27 October 1926	2639	2639	Permitted (adults only)	BARCH; DKB
<i>Der heilige Berg</i>	FPB	13831	7 October 1926		3100	Permitted	
	FPB	14464	16 December 1926	3024	3024	Permitted	DIF
	FPB	15382	30 March 1927	2668	2668	Permitted	DKB
	FPB	32938	25 January 1933 Renewed 17 October 1935	1128	1128	Permitted	BARCH; DKB
<i>Berlin. Symphonie der Großstadt</i>	FPB	15891	11 June 1927	1466	1466	Permitted	BARCH
<i>Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten (Oktober)</i>	FPB		29 March 1928	2210	2210	Permitted	Sudendorf (1984: 96)
	FOP	6490	22 April 1933			Banned	DIF
<i>Deutscher Rundfunk</i>	FPB	19946	31 August 1928	1189	1189	Permitted	BARCH
<i>Tönende Welle</i>	FPB	29210	10 June 1931	575	575	Permitted	BARCH
<i>Die kleine Schraube</i>	FPB	26553	8 August 1930	242	242	Permitted	BARCH; DKB
<i>Der blaue Expresß</i>	FPB	26665	27 August 1930	1590	1583	Permitted (adults only)	BARCH; DKB
	FOP	6490	22 April 1933			Banned	DIF

III Letters to Eisenstein

Date	Sent from	Signatories	Sources
1 June 1926	Berlin	Richard Pfeiffer [Prometheus]	Herlinghaus (1960: 286–90, document 25) Herlinghaus and Zilinski (1967: 1105–9) Bulgakowa (1998: 75–8)
17 July 1926	Berlin	[Prometheus]	Sudendorf (1984: 75)
14 October 1927	Berlin	Richard Pfeiffer	Herlinghaus and Zilinski (1967: 1112–13)
6 November 1927	Berlin	Edmund Meisel	Herlinghaus and Zilinski (1967: 1114) Sudendorf (1984: 75)
8 December 1927	Berlin	Els and Edmund Meisel	Herlinghaus and Zilinski (1967: 1115–17) Sudendorf (1984: 75–6)
30 December 1927	Berlin	Els and Edmund Meisel	Sudendorf (1984: 76–9)
29 January 1928	Berlin	Meisel	Sudendorf (1984: 79–80)
3 February 1928	Berlin	Willi Münzenberg	Bulgakowa (1998: 79–80)
2 April 1928 [telegram]	Berlin	Els Meisel	Bulgakowa (1998: 39)
5 April 1928	Berlin	Edmund and Els Meisel	Herlinghaus and Zilinski (1967: 1118–20) Sudendorf (1984: 80–1)
6 June 1928	Berlin	The Meisels	Sudendorf (1984: 81–2)
5 July 1928	Berlin	Els und Edmund Meisel	Sudendorf (1984: 82–3)
25 July 1928	Berlin	Meisel	Sudendorf (1984: 83)
1 September 1928* [no date]	[Berlin]	Meisel	Sudendorf (1984: 83) Handwritten; * date suggested by Sudendorf
14 September 1928	Berlin	The Meisels	Sudendorf (1984: 84)
13 October 1928	Berlin	Edmund and Els Meisel	Sudendorf (1984: 84–5)
31 October 1928	Berlin	The Meisels	Sudendorf (1984: 85)
17 March 1929	London	The Meisels	Sudendorf (1984: 85–6)
5 April 1929	London	The Meisels	Sudendorf (1984: 86–7)
18 April 1929	London	The Meisels	Bulgakowa (1998: 85–6)
31 August 1929	London	Meisel	Bulgakowa (1998: 86–9)
9 October 1929	London	Meisel	Bulgakowa (1998: 89–90)
October 1929 [no date]	[London]	The Meisels	Bulgakowa (1998: 90)

IV Meisel's unrealized projects

Note: Some of the projects detailed below may be duplications

Year	Project	Sources
1928	Unnamed sound film proposal with script by Els Meisel, music by Meisel, direction by Ruttmann	Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 14 September 1928
	<i>Entscheidungen auf den Schienen</i> (<i>Judgements on the rails</i>): sound film proposal, whose main protagonist was a train; script by M. Ells [Els Meisel], music by Meisel	Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 13 October 1928
	Unnamed sound film proposal concerning a modern 'traffic ballet' with script by M. Ells and music by Meisel	
	Manuscript proposal for a film described as 'anti-militaristic, against the armaments industry; a commentary on society and detective films'; negotiations with Emil Unfried (formerly of Prometheus), now in charge of the Volksfilmverband and Weltfilm; to be made in Russia	Meisel to Eisenstein, Berlin, 13 October 1928
1929	Three sound-film scenarios written by Meisel whilst he was in London: <i>What shall we do with a drunken sailor?</i> John Riley <i>A Symphony of London</i>	See Chapter 10
	Post-synchronization of <i>General Line</i> (Eisenstein, 1929)	
1930	Sound-film revue	Sudendorf (1984: 31–2)
	Negotiations to return to England for an Anglo-German film production	Meisel (1930-01-01) <i>Film-Kurier</i> (1930-01-15)
	Operetta for a German stage company	<i>Film-Kurier</i> (1930-02-22)
	Backstage musical comedy (sound film), based on an idea by Paul and Thea Henckels, who were both actors on the German stage and screen. Working title: <i>Mitternacht, Mondschein und . . . du!</i> (<i>Midnight, Moonlight and . . . you!</i>). Plot concerned a competition to write hit songs; Meisel was contracted to write the songs	
	Meisel currently working on a sound film (musical comedy); Meisel to conduct music himself at the recording in New York later in the autumn	<i>Film-Kurier</i> (1930-03-21)
	Contract with Production Markus in Paris for several sound films (scenarios by Dr Stefan Markus), the first of which – <i>Militarismus</i> (<i>Militarism</i>) – was already in production; sound to be recorded by Tobis in Berlin	<i>Film-Kurier</i> (1930-09-03); Blakeston (1930-11)

V Documentary sources for Meisel in England

The Film Society Collection, BFI Special Collections, London

FS11	Item 11. Press clippings relating to The Film Society 1925–1995
FS13a	Item 13a. Music for performances of The Film Society. Correspondence regarding orchestras and other music for performances 1925–1934
FS15.5.33	Item 15. Film Society Performances, Fifth Season 1929–1930. Programme 33 BRONENOSETS POTYOMKIN
FS19	Item 19. Films considered but not shown by the Film Society
FS24b	Item 24b. Account notices for members 1929–1938 (Incomplete.)
FS24c	Performance profit and loss reports 1930–1934 (Incomplete)
FS24f	Item 24f. Miscellaneous financial summaries. 1930–1932
FS31a	Item 31a. Correspondence with Pierre Braunberger, 1929–1931

Ivor Montagu Collection, BFI Special Collections, London

IM104	Item 104. Correspondence between Eisenstein and Mr and Mrs Montagu 1923–1932
IM115	Item 115. BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN (1925) Notes on material held in NFA at 18.12.1972
IM116	Item 116. BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN (1925) Correspondence on various matters relating to the film, including the original score
IM116a	Item 116a. Correspondence with Meisel's widow on whereabouts of music for POTEMKIN and other films
IM118	Item 118. THE GENERAL LINE – Sound notes by Eisenstein (in English). Cost estimate for synchronisation

James Anderson Collection, BFI Special Collections, London

JA19	Box 19. Films (misc.)
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Oswell Blakeston Papers, Harvey Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin

OBII.11.5	Series II. Works, 1927–1985, Box 11, folder 5. <i>I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside</i> [film, 1929], photographic stills, 1929
OBIII.22.7	Series III. Personal Papers, 1929–1985, Box 22, folder 7. Contracts and business receipts, 1929–1983.

Sources: BFI National Library (2007 [1996]); University of Texas at Austin (2011)

VI Filmography

Details of the films for which Meisel wrote original scores are given below in chronological order of release, together with a summary of extant musical materials, all available recordings and a selection of audio-visual sources in DVD and VHS formats. The film lengths stated are those for the German premieres. See Appendix II for any subsequent changes in length due to censorship and editorial adjustments.

Das Jahr 1905 (Panzerkreuzer „Potemkin“) (silent)

Original title:	<i>Bronenosets Potyomkin</i> (USSR)
Alternative titles:	<i>The Battleship Potemkin</i> (UK/USA); <i>The Armored Cruiser Potemkin</i> (USA); <i>Le cuirassé Potemkine</i> (France)
Director:	Sergei M. Eisenstein
Photography:	Eduard K. Tissé
Assistant Director:	Grigori V. Alexandrov
Production:	First Goskino Factory, Moscow, 1925 Original length: 1820 metres, 5 acts Premiere: 21 December 1925, Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow Release: 18 January 1926 (Moscow)
German editor:	Piel Jutzi
Distributed by:	Prometheus Film Verleih- und Vertriebs GmbH, Berlin
German premiere:	29 April 1926, Apollo Theater, Berlin; music conducted by Meisel
Length:	1586.85 metres, 6 acts
Musical material:	An original copy of the piano short score published by Prometheus in 1926 was found in the Saxony State Library in Dresden in 1983 (Tode 2003: 38), facsimiles and photocopies of which can be accessed in the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin, and the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt. There is a second original copy of the piano short score in the Eisenstein Archive, Moscow, together with extant parts and score for salon orchestra.
Recordings:	The reconstruction by Mark Andreas (1986) was recorded by Mark Andreas and the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana in 1987, 2-CD set: edel 0029062EDL (1995)
VHS:	The reconstruction by Arthur Kleiner (1972, using the MOMA print) was released by Contemporary Films on Tartan Video TVT 1225 (1996), 66 minutes, 16 mm, and Castle Hendring HEN 2 119 [n.d.], 65 minutes. The latter also contains the Mosfilm sound version with Kryukov's score from 1950, 63 minutes.

DVD: The reconstruction by Mark Andreas (1986) is available on Films sans Frontières EDV 229 (2002), combined with the Mosfilm 'Jubilee' print from 1976. It is also possible to select the Shostakovich compiled score or Kryukov's score (from 1950), matched with the 1976 print.
The restoration by Patalas and score reconstruction by Helmut Imig (2005) are available on Transit Film 8697099149 (2007) and Kino International K558 (2007)

Überflüssige Menschen [*Superfluous People*] (silent)

Production & Distribution: Prometheus Film Verleih- und Vertriebs GmbH
Director: Alexander Rasumny
Scenario: Alexander Rasumny, after Anton Chekhov
Photography: Otto Kanturek, Karl Attenburger
Length: 2639 metres, 6 Acts
German premiere: 2 November 1926, Capitol, Berlin; Meisel's music was conducted by Willy Schmidt-Gentner

Der heilige Berg (silent)

Alternative titles: *The Holy Mountain* (USA), *La montagne sacrée* (France)
Production: Ufa
Distribution: Parufamet
Director: Arnold Fanck
Camera: Helmar Lerski, Hans Schneeberger, Sepp Allgeier, Albert Benitz, Kurt Neubert
Length: 3024 metres, 9 reels (Prologue and 8 acts)
German premiere: 17 December 1926, Ufa-Palast am Zoo, Berlin; Meisel's music was conducted by Arthur Guttman
Musical material: The piano short score published by Ufa in 1927 can be accessed in the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt.
Recordings: The reconstruction by Helmut Imig from the late 1980s was (partially?) recorded in 1990 by Helmut Imig and the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, 2-CD set: edel 0029062EDL (1995)

Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt (silent)

Production & Hire: Deutsche Vereinsfilm AG, Berlin & Fox-Europa
Director: Walther Ruttmann
Camera: Reimar Kuntze, Robert Baberske, Laszlo Schäffer
German premiere: 23 September 1927, Tauentzien-Palast, Berlin; music conducted by Meisel
Length: 1466 metres, 5 acts
Musical material: The piano short score published by Fox in 1927 can be accessed at the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin.
DVD: The reconstruction by Bernd Thewes (2007) is available on Edition *filmmuseum* 39 (2008)

Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten (Oktober)

Original title: *Oktyabr'*
Alternative titles: *October, 10 Days That Shook the World (USA)*
Director: Sergei M. Eisenstein, Grigori V. Alexandrov
Photography: Eduard K. Tissé
Production: Sovkino
Original length: 2800 metres
Premiere: 7 November 1927, Moscow (fragments); 14 and 23 January 1928 (private screenings)
Release: 14 March 1928
German editor: Piel Jutzi
Distributed by: Prometheus Film Verleih- und Vertriebs GmbH, Berlin
German premiere: 2 April 1928, Tauentzien-Palast, Berlin; music conducted by Meisel
Length: 2210 metres, 6 acts
Musical material: An original copy of the piano short score published by Prometheus (1928) is held by RGALI, Moscow. There are also incomplete sets of orchestral parts in the BFI Special Collections, London and the Eisenstein Archive, Moscow

Deutscher Rundfunk (sound film, Germany, 1928)

Alternative titles: *Tönende Welle*
Production & Hire: Tri-Ergon-Musik AG, 1928, under contract to Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft (the federal public radio broadcasting network)
Director: Walther Ruttmann
Camera: Reimar Kuntze
Sound engineer: Karl Brodmerkel
Producer: Guido Bagier
Technical director: Joseph Masolle
Length: 1189 metres
German premiere: 31 August 1928, 5th German Radio Exhibition, Berlin (first part only)
1 September 1928, 5th German Radio Exhibition, Berlin (in full)

I Do Love to Be Beside the Seaside (silent?)

Production: Pool Group, 1929
Director: Oswell Blakeston
Hire: Studio-Film
Musical materials: An autograph fragment entitled 'Baby', held in Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt
Length: Unknown
British premiere: Unknown

The Crimson Circle (sound)

Original title: *Der rote Kreis* (silent)
Production (silent): Efzet-Film GmbH (silent, 1928)
Original length: 3100 metres, 8 acts
German premiere: 25 March 1929, Capitol, Berlin¹
Director (silent): Friedrich Zelnik
Scenario: Fanny Carlsen, after the detective story *The Crimson Circle* by Edgar Wallace
Camera: Frederik Fuglsang, Leslie Rowson
Production (sound): British Talking Pictures (sound-on-disc system)
Director (sound): Sinclair Hill
Length: 7700 feet,² or approximately 2347 metres
London trade show: 27 August 1929

Die kleine Schraube (*The little screw*) (sound)

Original title: Vintik-Špintik
Production: Sovkino (silent animation, 1927)
Original length: 314 metres, 1 act
Director (animation): V. Tvardovskij
Scenario: N. Agnivecev
Camera: Bočarov
Animators: V. Kuklin, S. Žukov, I. Sorochtin, A. Presnjakov
Distribution: Prometheus Verleih- und Vertriebs GmbH
Director (sound): A. J. Lippl
Sound production: Organon im Polyphon-Grammophon-Konzern
Length: 242 metres
German premiere: 12 August 1930, Marmorhaus, Berlin

Panzerkreuzer Potemkin (sound)

Details as before, except:
Original composition & musical direction: Edmund Meisel
Direction (sound): A. J. Lippl
Sound production: Organon im Polyphon-Grammophon-Konzern
Length: 1353 metres, 5 acts
German premiere: 12 August 1930, Marmorhaus, Berlin
Musical material: 3 sets of sound discs (each with 5 discs) found in the Filmmuseum, Wien, in 2003; the last two acts also survive in a sound-on-film print (unknown German film archive)

¹ Entry for *Der rote Kreis* (1928) on www.filmportal.de, accessed 1 May 2011.

² The length is given as 7000 feet in the *Kinematograph Year Book 1930*, 63.

Der blaue Expreß (silent and sound)

Original title: *Goluboi Ekspress*
Alternative titles: *China Express* (USA); *Blue Express* (UK),
Le Train mongol (France)
Production: Sovkino
Original length: 1700 metres, 5 acts
Premiere; 20 December 1929
Director: Ilya Trauberg
Camera: B. Khrennikov, Y. Stilianudis
Sound production: Organon im Polyphon-Grammophon-Konzern
(sound-on-disc; post-synchronized in November
1930)
Production/hire: Prometheus Verleih- und Vertriebs GmbH
Editor: Piel Jutzi
Length: 1583 metres, 5 acts
German premiere: 20 October 1930, Mozartsaal, Berlin (silent with live
orchestral accompaniment)

Le Train mongol (sound, 1931)

Production: La Société d'Expansion Cinématographique
Artistic director: Abel Gance
Sound system: Société Organon de la Polyphone-Gramophone
(sound-on-film process)
Length: Running time approximately 60 minutes
French premiere: Unknown

Sources: Sudendorf (1984: 94–7); Taylor (2000: xiii–xiv); Taylor (2002: 86);
Bioscope (1929-08-28)

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