

# The Director on the Soundtrack

## The Functions of Music in Roman Polański's Film-Making

### Summary

This book aims to present an in-depth analysis of the function and meaning of music used in Roman Polański's films and how this music varies in relation to the poetics of particular film genres. The turning point in this film-maker's work with regard to film music was the premature death of Krzysztof Komeda, Polański's first composer and a great influence on his early work. Moreover, this Poznań-born composer wrote the music for nine films made by the famous director. After Komeda's death Roman Polański made three films each with Philippe Sarde, Wojciech Kilar and Alexandre Desplat. There are also composers who worked on only one Polański project, e.g. Ennio Morricone.

This book comprises five chapters with an introduction and conclusion. The discussions of the function of music during different periods of Polański's film-making are diachronic, because of their reference to his evolution as a director in the context of ability to functionalize music in film.

The introduction comprises a discussion of film music's relation to directing, a brief description of methods for researching music in film over a period of tens of years, and the selection of the most appropriate research tools for Roman Polański's film work. For the purposes of this book what is proposed is a division into film music for dramatic and narrative functions (horizontal system) and music's relation to picture (formal-structural relations of music and film in the vertical system). This concept emerged from the work of Sergiusz Eisenstein, Pierre Schaeffer, Alicja Helman, Zofia Lissa, Iwona Sowińska, Anna G. Piotrowska and Timothy Scheurer.

Chapters One and Two are devoted to the films for which the music was composed by Krzysztof Komeda. Chapter One, *Roman Polański's Early Work. Short Films – Student Assignments and Extra-Curricular* discusses his short films. Chapter Two is entitled: *Polański's First Full-Length Films. Jazz and its Boundaries in "Auteur Cinema of the Genres"*.

In Chapter Three *The Film-Maker – Composer's Ghost. A Successor to Komeda Urgently Sought!* I focus on Polański's first full-length films without Krzysztof Komeda's music: *Macbeth*, *Chinatown*, *The Tenant*, *Tess* and *Pirates*, which include the third and last Polański picture for which Phillippe Sarde composed the music.

The fourth chapter *Polański and “The Dinosaurs of (Not Necessarily) Film Music”*, presents the most musically varied period in the work of the Polish director, from *Frantic*, with its soundtrack by Ennio Morricone, through to *The Pianist*, Polański’s last film with Wojciech Kilar. For the sake of accuracy we should note that a significant part of this chapter is devoted to the function of adapted/ pre-compiled music, mainly classical and pop.

Chapter Five *Emotional and intellectual* deals with Polański’s cooperation with new-generation composers: Rachel Portman and Alexandre Desplat, with whom Polański worked on his three latest films. The chapter discusses two ways of connecting music and image – synthesis and counterpoint – which are characteristic of Polański’s later work.

In addition to its thorough analysis of the function of music as one of the elements of film language, this book proposes an interdisciplinary approach to film, which as an art form possesses qualities similar to those of a musical work. In particular this concerns Roman Polański’s early works and his most recent ones.

*Translated by Rob Pagett*