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## Hearing Films: A Contribution to the Discussion on Film Sound and Music Education

I shall start with a confession: my first profession is sound designer. I have spent five years studying practical and aesthetic aspects of sound as it is used in films, television broadcasts, television series, music and sound systems. It has been nearly four years now since I started working in the industry. And every time I mention my job for the first time in a conversation, my interlocutors ask me the same thing: why is sound in Polish films always so poor? Well, there is no simple answer to this question. More often than not I myself deplore the low quality of sound in Polish films but at the same time I am well aware that this problem stems from a number of factors. I often recall a comment made by Professor Alicja Helman in 1973, when she analysed audiovisual relations in Grzegorz Królikiewicz's film *Na wylot* [Through] (1972). She said then that the film "is a rare specimen in Polish cinema, **which apart from a few isolated examples is made by deaf directors for a deaf audience**" (Helman, 1973, p. 16). While this statement is rather extreme, it still seems to point to the essential dilemma which I am facing when writing this article. On the one hand, there is the issue of educating film students about sound; on the other hand, there is another, equally pressing problem of the audience's aural skills. Both these aspects are, to a point, conditioned by culture. They may be at least partially attributed to the lack of ear training at school and the profile of film education at all levels of education.

The present article is an attempt to organise various aspects of perception and analysis of film sound, or rather – to answer the question why these skills are acquired at such a low level; in addition, I will describe several initiatives aimed at changing the appalling *status quo*.

Despite more than ninety years of the history of film sounds, most comments regarding the way in which sound influences film viewers or contributes to creating film narratives are limited to stressing the illustrative function of music (usually

with respect to the film characters' emotional states) and the function of dialogues<sup>1</sup> as transmitters of information – for most viewers, the only requirement relating to the latter is that they should be audible and comprehensible. The tendency to overlook other sound elements almost completely may stem from viewing sound as a medium functionally limited to mirroring reality,<sup>2</sup> overlooking its potential for expanding meanings or creating new ones within the sound structure or on the boundary between sound and image. Film sound is usually taken for granted and thus perceived rather than analysed; as a result, the emotional message decoded by the viewers<sup>3</sup> dominates the discussion of film sound mechanisms. As a result, film sound is usually perceived in a negative way, i.e. when technical errors occur (and, for instance, dialogues are unintelligible) or the authors' artistic designs are not comprehended by the viewers (e.g. there is a scene purposefully devoid of diegetic sound,<sup>4</sup> which cannot be explained in the context of the entire work).

Such expectations seem exceedingly superficial, especially taking into account the vast array of creative possibilities based on sound or its subliminal influence. As Michel Chion points out, “in continuing to say that we ‘see’ a film or a television programme, we persist in ignoring how the soundtrack has modified perception. At best, some people are content with an additive model, according to which witnessing an audiovisual spectacle basically consists of seeing images plus hearing sounds. Each perception remains nicely in its own compartment” (Chion, 1994, pp. XXV–XXVI). The reason for this state of affairs can be traced down to culturally sanctioned eye-centrism, or, perhaps, to significant gaps in music and sound education (not only as part of film or media education, but in terms of general education at all school levels).

There can be no doubt that in the modern world there is a gigantic disproportion between the daily intake of visual and auditory information. The tendency to rely on visual communication can be attributed to biological mechanisms of perception typical of humans, strengthened by education. As Urszula Jarecka explains, “the eye grants us immediate access to the world. [...] The total sum of our experience and all stimuli, even those auditory and tactile, need to be mediated by sight in order to be correctly deciphered by the brain” (Jarecka, 1999, pp. 49–50).

<sup>1</sup> Or verbal language in more general terms, as certain films (e.g. documentaries) can be dominated by voice-over. There are also utterances that compose films' metadiegetic layer, such as characters' internal monologues.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noticing the creative potential of sound even in this “mirroring” of reality. In fact, film sound does not have that much in common with the aural reality we actually experience.

<sup>3</sup> Either consciously or unconsciously. More often than not, film sound appeals to the viewers' subconsciousness, evoking subliminal associations or emotions.

<sup>4</sup> Diegetic sound is sound coming from any film space, from sources visible on screen (located inside a frame) or not (located outside a frame). One of the film sound basic functions is not so much to produce film reality but rather to expand it (especially through the use of advanced film sound technologies).

The same is argued by John Berger: “It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain the world with words but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (Berger, 1972, p. 7). On the other hand, in contrast to sight, hearing cannot be “switched off” – hearing is a continuous and multidimensional process,<sup>5</sup> which makes it an important defensive mechanism (e.g. during sleep).

Importantly, hearing is the first sense developed during pregnancy. As Walter Murch explains, neurobiologists have established that “[h]earing is the first of our senses to be switched on, four-and-a-half months after we are conceived [...]. Birth wakens those four sleepyhead senses and they scramble for the child’s attention – a race ultimately won by the darting and powerfully insistent Sight – but there is no circumventing the fact that **Sound** was there before any of the other senses” (Murch, 2005). Significantly, as we are reminded by Urszula Jarecka, “at early stages of human development we explore the world in a syncretic manner and sight is not privileged at the expense of the remaining senses. Smell and touch prove more useful, more functional than sight, which is the last sense to develop, not only in human embryos, but also evolutionally” (Jarecka, 1999, p. 56). It seems, then, that sight dominates other senses only when children become exposed to various elements of culture.<sup>6</sup>

This dominance of sight over the remaining senses becomes greater with placing children in educational institutions at all levels of education. Developing aural competences – such as attentive, analytical listening (e.g. as part of music lessons) – is soon abandoned to make way for training other skills (especially visual ones, such as reading comprehension). As students get older, the emphasis is shifted from socialising them to transmitting knowledge. This is of course adapted to external reality where students are supposed to function upon leaving school. As Maciej Białas explains, the “technologised, consumerist postmodern society does not seem to be a promised land for common music education [and therefore neither for developing aural competence – author’s note].

<sup>5</sup> This shows that our permanent exposure to sound stimuli increases, as we tend to live in constant noise. Theoretically, it is possible to block one’s ears – analogically to closing one’s eyes – but this requires a more complex operation. What is more, due to the physical properties of sound waves it is usually only possible to muffle sounds, changing their tone, rather than blocking them entirely.

<sup>6</sup> Parents are advised to assist in their children’s aural development during pregnancy and early childhood. One popular tip is to play certain music genres or works by particular composers during pregnancy (most popular choices are Bach and Mozart). In addition the popular initiative “All of Poland Reads to Kids” (20 minutes per day, every day) refers to shaping children’s personality through sound stimuli, i.e. books read aloud (the emphasis is also placed on the bonding between parents and children resulting from their daily reading together). Nevertheless, it should be noticed that children’s books are published so as to be attractive in visual terms, thus they are dominated by vivid colours, well-defined shapes, etc. Their content and language value are often treated as secondary. The next stage of children’s contact with culture usually consists of watching animated films. In these films, sound is usually limited to words and music; occasional sound effects are meant to make certain situations appear funnier or more interesting – thus they are mostly used as attractions: additional elements which may be rather catchy but do not bring anything new to the picture.

Present-day schools tend to focus on transmitting knowledge and skills which prepare students to function in that kind of society” (Białas, 2010, p. 236).

Analysing the Polish Core Curriculum, it is easy to notice that only early childhood care and education counts among its priorities the need to “introduce children to the world of aesthetic values and teach them to express themselves through music, dance, song, short performances and various forms of visual arts” (Journal of Laws of 2014, item 803). Kindergarten is also the only stage where children participate in any classes combining music and movement (eurythmic classes).<sup>7</sup> Their main goal is to teach kids music and sensitise them to this form of art, as well as to teach them to coordinate movement with sound. At later stages of education, according to the existing regulations, students should acquire other skills such as reading comprehension, analytical thinking (mathematical and scientific),<sup>8</sup> communication (both in speech and in writing), team work and using new technologies for learning purposes. Interestingly, none of the educational goals listed in ministerial guidelines include such skills as attentive listening or listening comprehension.<sup>9</sup> Of course, school curricula still include subjects linked to basic music education (“music education” in grades 1–3 of primary school, “music” in classes 4–6 of primary school and in lower-secondary schools),<sup>10</sup> but the quality of teaching often leaves much to be desired.<sup>11</sup>

General curriculum guidelines referring to the content of the abovementioned subjects also confirm prioritising transmitting musical knowledge over fostering the skill of active listening<sup>12</sup> or shaping musical tastes and encouraging students to participate in musical culture.

<sup>7</sup> The crucial role of these classes was the subject of an extensive debate in 2013, when the government announced the withdrawal of funds for additional courses in kindergartens, including eurythmics. Kindergarten teachers, parents and eurythmics teachers all participated in the debate, voicing their belief in the importance of receiving such training in childhood.

<sup>8</sup> The Core Curriculum for later stages of education uses such a term as “scientific thinking” to denote skills needed to utilise scientific knowledge and formulate conclusions based on empirical research in natural and social sciences.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, communication skills in their traditional (oral) form involve attentive listening, but this type of listening requires different cognitive processes. The only exception is learning foreign languages, where the skill of (semantic) understanding of spoken utterances in a foreign language is treated as one of the four basic skills.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Core Curriculum for upper secondary schools, music education can, but does not have to be, conducted as part of the subject: history of music (only at the extended level); selected issues can also be addressed during cultural studies lessons (basic level) (Journal of Laws of 2012, item 977).

<sup>11</sup> Elements of music education for early childhood education and grades 1–3 of primary school are included in university courses in pedagogy for future teachers but such a form of training does not determine the teachers’ individual music sensitivity or talents, nor does it guarantee sufficient competence in educating such a demanding group as young children. It is very often the case that music teachers have only finished postgraduate courses, without any specific musical education, which is reflected in the quality of teaching.

<sup>12</sup> This should not come as a surprise – it is much easier to transmit knowledge in history or theory of music than analytical or practical skills (improvisation, singing). Another typical cause of this state of affairs is lack of sufficient training on the part of teachers.

My general comments concerning the abandonment of ear training in favour of sight-based skills apply equally well to film education. Moreover, they remain true both with respect to general film education<sup>13</sup> and university education for future filmmakers as well as film and music specialists.<sup>14</sup>

In accordance with ministerial guidelines, general film education should (i.e. it does not have to) be conducted from primary school onwards. In its active form (analysis and interpretation of films) it should be incorporated into Polish language classes in grades 4–6 of primary school. Interestingly enough, skills that are to be taught include “analysis and interpretation of texts of culture”. According to further guidelines, the students are supposed to “name elements of film and television works (screenplay, directing, take, acting); identify characteristic traits of audiovisual messages (e.g. films, news programmes, entertainment programmes) as well as their means (moving pictures, sound)” (Journal of Laws of 2014, item 803). Such guidelines discourage teachers from educating students in **listening** to films and make them focus on analysing film images instead.<sup>15</sup> At higher levels of film education, students mostly explore links between films and literature,<sup>16</sup> as well as learn some elements of film history.<sup>17</sup>

This situation, deplorable from the point of view of films as integral audiovisual unities, is also reflected in university education aimed at professionals: film specialists and students receiving training in film-related professions. An analysis of university curricula shows that – apart from music theory and music history, which are included in general education, as well as a vast array of subjects linked to film analysis, narrative and interpretation<sup>18</sup> – very few academic institutions offer courses specifically focused on film music or film sound in general. Notable exceptions include a seminar in film music at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow,<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> It is not the aim of the present article to discuss general accessibility of film education or opportunities for such education and its quality at all levels of schooling. For the purpose of the present study I am making the assumption that film education should (according to the Core Curriculum) be conducted as part of such school subjects as Polish language and cultural studies. I am also not discussing teachers' competence as far as film is concerned (especially film sound and music), even though this competence definitely merits discussion. In the latter part of the article I refer to the growing array of possibilities for supplementary education in these fields, offered by various institutions outside schools.

<sup>14</sup> Music specialists are increasingly often interested in film music.

<sup>15</sup> Another issue is the lack of proper equipment in most schools that would enable the conducting of proper classes in film education; this very often applies especially to proper sound systems enabling the analysis of sound in film works.

<sup>16</sup> Often also paintings and films, small elements of which are incorporated into art lessons.

<sup>17</sup> Film history with respect to film sound is usually limited to pointing to the sound breakthrough of 1927 as a caesura in film history.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, it is possible to imagine having discussions on the role of sound in shaping film narrative or interpretation as part of these classes, but based on my experience as a film studies student I can say that such occasions are extremely rare.

<sup>19</sup> BA studies in film and new media studies; number of teaching hours listed on the website of the Institute of Audiovisual Arts of the Jagiellonian University: 30. Followed by an exam in 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The seminar is taught by Dr. habil. Iwona Sowińska, a musicologist and film scholar.

the course Music and Film at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań<sup>20</sup> and lectures in sound and music in films at the University of Białystok.<sup>21</sup>

Positive changes can be observed at the University of Lodz, where newly published curricula (in force since the academic year 2016/2017) for both BA<sup>22</sup> and MA<sup>23</sup> programmes include a new subject: sound and music in films. Significantly, the subject is included twice – in both BA and MA cycles – which sheds a ray of hope for elaborating on certain sound issues in a more advanced manner with MA students. Of course, much can be done within other subjects which should incorporate elements of sound and film music knowledge as well as foster skills needed for sound analysis (film workshops, basic film knowledge, basic film analysis, etc.); universities should also provide specialised optional courses. As far as musicology is concerned, film music is also only taught at a few universities.<sup>24</sup>

Significantly, academies educating future filmmakers do not offer enough training as far as film sound is concerned.<sup>25</sup> Among a large number of subjects focused on visual elements of film (composition, narrative, cinematography, set design, costumes etc.) there is a significant shortage (at least in my opinion<sup>26</sup>) of

<sup>20</sup> BA studies in film studies and media culture; number of teaching hours listed on the website of the Chair for Film, Television and New Media at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań: 30. Followed by an exam in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

<sup>21</sup> MA extramural programme in cultural studies, discipline: film and media studies, number of teaching hours: 8 (!) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, followed by a grade. Judging from the syllabus posted on the university's internet platform, despite its promising name, the subject focuses on the role of music in film sound. The teacher – Professor Edward Kulikowski – is a conductor (by both education and profession).

<sup>22</sup> Full-time BA programme in film studies; 20 teaching hours, followed by a grade, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Details such as syllabus or the lecturer's name have not been announced yet.

<sup>23</sup> Full-time MA programme in cultural studies – film studies; 20 teaching hours in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, followed by a grade. Details such as syllabus or the lecturer's name have not been disclosed either.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, at the Jagiellonian University, which offers an optional (!) seminar (30 teaching hours) followed by a grade, taught by Dr. Anna Piotrowska. The syllabus is available on the website of the Institute of Musicology at the Jagiellonian University.

<sup>25</sup> Presently, only two music academies in Poland (the Feliks Nowowiejski Music Academy in Bydgoszcz – BA programme and the Frederic Chopin Music University in Warsaw – BA and MA programmes) educate students in the profession of film sound editor. It seems interesting that specialised studies in film, television and media sound are offered by music academies, while there are no similar courses taught in state film schools. On the other hand, there is a selection of private institutions training professional film sound editors (e.g. the Film and Television Academy in Warsaw – a two-year programme).

Yet another question is the education of film music composers. In comparison to Western countries, courses offered in Poland seem to be much underdeveloped (a BA programme in film music composing at the Grażyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Music Academy in Lodz; a postgraduate programme in special and digital music composing as well as theatre and film music composing at the Karol Lipiński Music Academy in Wrocław). Due to it being a very complex issue, procedures and quality of educating composers and sound editors will not be discussed in the present article.

<sup>26</sup> This conclusion stems from my own professional experience. On a number of occasions I have worked as sound designer and sound editor with filmmaking students (film editing, directing, cinematography) at leading Polish film schools (the Film School in Lodz, the University of Silesia in Katowice). More often than not, I experienced problems resulting from their lack of knowledge and skills concerning both technological issues linked with film sound (while shooting and in post-production) and the possibilities of shaping film structure through sound.

teaching hours devoted strictly to film sound. In the largest state-owned film academy in Poland – the Polish National Film School in Lodz<sup>27</sup> – in their entire five-year study programme, unit production managers can expect only 30 teaching hours devoted to a course in film sound – film music; the situation is a little bit better for cinematography students (120 teaching hours in total: sound in films – 30 teaching hours of lectures and 30 teaching hours of classes; music in films – 60 teaching hours of lectures; all of the above in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of studies). Most sound-related courses are taught to students of directing<sup>28</sup> – which seems well justified if we take into account the specifics of the profession. They may expect as many as 210 teaching hours of sound-related courses in the first three semesters, including subjects such as: film sound structure (90 teaching hours), basic sound technology (15 teaching hours) and film music (105 teaching hours<sup>29</sup>). An equally privileged group are students of film editing<sup>30</sup> who undergo 375 teaching hours devoted to sound in the entire course of their studies through subjects such as: film music (120 teaching hours), sound technology (60 teaching hours), film sound editing (120 teaching hours) and film sound design (75 teaching hours<sup>31</sup>). The most obvious gap here is the lack of an analytical subject such as film sound aesthetics for students of directing; it is also worth noticing the fact that all sound-related courses are taught in the first year, while the remaining years do not include any elements of sound education.

There seems to be a clear parallel in terms of difficulties connected with sound and film music education and those connected with film education in schools. These would include: a lack of the pre-acquired skill of analytical listening, logistic difficulties and lack of adequate competence of teachers. It has long been a subject of debate who should teach courses in film sound and music at universities. Due to the abovementioned gaps in curricula, upon graduating from film academies neither film scholars, nor musicologists, nor composers or music theorists possess adequate skills to teach these subjects, as these issues require knowledge both of films and music. Potential teachers also need to possess outstanding aural sensitivity and listening skills, which – due to their ephemeral quality – are hard to verbalise or describe in any specific terms.

<sup>27</sup> Being a widely renowned institution, the Film School in Lodz was selected in the previous article as the main representative example. Parallel situations can be observed in any other film schools in Poland (both state-owned and private).

<sup>28</sup> Detailed curricula are available on the academy's website: [Filmschool.lodz.pl](http://Filmschool.lodz.pl).

<sup>29</sup> Note the disproportion: film music courses account for one half of the entire time devoted to sound education, while it is legitimate to assume that the remaining courses also tackle the topic of film music.

<sup>30</sup> Detailed curricula are available on the academy's website: [Filmschool.lodz.pl](http://Filmschool.lodz.pl).

<sup>31</sup> It is worth mentioning that students of editing learn more about sound than their colleagues pursuing a degree in directing. It is especially puzzling that the subject called "sound design" (according to the curriculum, it is the only course taught in part by a practising sound editor, Dr. habil. Joanna Napieralska) is addressed at film editing students. This may result from the current tendency in the film and television industry where film editors are often expected to be qualified to work with sound as well as with image. In most recent years, film music for students of directing was taught by Professor Marian Szukalski, who took over from the previous lecturer, Professor Henryk Kuźniak.

Another related issue is the problem with academic theory related to the topic. There are very few books on film sound and music available in Polish and none of them have earned the right to be deemed a complete survey of the topic. One canonical work is Zofia Lissa's *Estetyka muzyki filmowej* [Film Music Aesthetics] (1964), bridging the fields of film musicology and philosophy; other works by the same author are also worth reading. Another recommended author is Professor Alicja Helman – a musicologist and film scholar, researching issues such as the history and aesthetics of film music.<sup>32</sup> Among newer works, it is worth mentioning Iwona Sowińska's *Dźwięki i obrazy. O słuchaniu filmów* [Sounds and Images: On Listening to Films] (2017).<sup>33</sup> Importantly, the scholar approaches sound as an integral part of films, not distinguishing film music at all; she also addresses several issues related to the perception of film sound. Finally, I would like to mention Anna Piotrowska's *O muzyce i filmie. Wprowadzenie do muzykologii filmowej* [On Music and Film: An Introduction to Film Musicology] (2014).<sup>34</sup>

The texts mentioned above are dedicated to the issue of sound in general, with a tendency to focus more on film music.<sup>35</sup> The issue of sound is also addressed in many reference books and textbooks on film, such as *Podstawy wiedzy o filmie* [Basic Film Knowledge] by Alicja Helman and Andrzej Pitrus (2008),<sup>36</sup> the monumental work by Jerzy Płażewski *Język filmu* [Film Language] (1982) (though the book has been rejected by academia), internationally acclaimed *Film Art. An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (1990) and even the popular science book *Kino bez tajemnic* [Cinema Revealed] (2009).

On the other hand, in Poland<sup>37</sup> there still has not been a book which would comprehensively appraise film sound-related issues. In terms of sound editing, much valuable information can be found in Małgorzata Przedpeńska-Bieniek's *Dźwięk w filmie* [Sound in Films] (2012); much hope was also raised by the Polish edition of David Lewis Yewdall's *Practical Art of Motion Picture Sound* (2011) – unfortunately, its jargon-based language and poor translation make it a text addressed only at a narrow group of advanced practitioners. There still has not been a worthy textbook, presenting an overview of aesthetic and theoretical issues connected with sound in films, supplemented by examples, which would

<sup>32</sup> See Helman, 1964; 1966 and shorter articles published in branch journals.

<sup>33</sup> As well as other articles on film musicology; see Sowińska, 2006; 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Its additional merit is a detailed and expert description of film musicals (in the second part of the volume).

<sup>35</sup> At the same time, it is worth noticing that monographs devoted to oeuvres of particular directors seldom devote any space to the issue of film music – Krzysztof Kozłowski's book *Stanley Kubrick* (2013) being a notable exception.

<sup>36</sup> Chapters: *Dźwięk* [Sound] and *Music* [Muzyka]. The book's great advantage is supplementing theoretical discussion with sample film analysis, exemplifying the discussed phenomena.

<sup>37</sup> There are a number of such works available in English, relating both to film sound theory and analysis, and sound design practice. In Poland, however, these are not easily available and are often very expensive. Suffice to mention *Film Sound: Theory and Practise* edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (1985) or works by Michel Chion, which have been translated into English. The quality of Polish editions (especially as far as the translation is concerned) is yet another problem.



assist film scholars, filmmakers and interested viewers in analysing such issues in an in-depth way.

Even though the above summary paints a pretty gloomy picture, it seems that recent years have brought some improvement. Film sound and film music-related issues are increasingly present at festivals and in the activities of various institutions offering film education programmes and events.<sup>38</sup> This concerns both popularising the topic among audiences and educating viewers from scratch, as well as training sessions addressed at professionals.

One of the first widely accessible initiatives of this kind was a new section at the T-Mobile International Film Festival, titled the New Horizons of Film Language. Its fourth edition in 2012 was organised under the heading “Sound in Films”. The screenings involved 10 interesting films<sup>39</sup> which were accompanied by meetings with filmmakers – not only directors describing their artistic goals but also sound designers, who perform the double role of carrying out the directors’ visions but also co-creating films.<sup>40</sup> The artists described, for instance, technological issues linked with film sound at various stages of film history (e.g. the director Piotr Szulkin talked about his film *Golem* [1979] and the sound designer Jacek Hamela focused on *Róża* directed by Wojciech Smarzowski [2011]) as well as opportunities for “artistic composition of sound”<sup>41</sup> or profiling the viewers’ viewpoint/listening point through various sound techniques and devices. The cycle of meetings and discussions was accompanied by the premiere of the Polish edition of a seminal work on sound in films: *Audio-wizja. Dźwięk i obraz w kinie* [Audio-vision: Sound on Screen; original title: *L’audio-vision: Le son au cinéma*] by Michel Chion (2009).<sup>42</sup>

A similar survey, focused on sound in documentary films, was conducted at the Camerimage festival in 2015. The festival’s section titled “Visions of Sound” included 12 documentary films (Polish and international), selected for their “creative use of sound, music and sound orchestration, serving as an additional commentary on the events presented in the films”, says Michał Dudziewicz, the documentary section’s curator (Dudziewicz). It is worth noticing that the section was offered to the audience as part of the International Festival of the Art of Cinematography, which is a typical industry event frequented for the most part by cinematographers

<sup>38</sup> The latter part of the article will present selected initiatives which, in my opinion, represent exceptional quality of teaching or prove especially important from our perspective. The list is by no means complete, but it can hope to present a survey of the most interesting sound-related events.

<sup>39</sup> The full list of discussed issues and presented films is available on the website [Nowehoryzonty.pl](http://Nowehoryzonty.pl).

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, the festival catalogue included a special text titled *Mały alfabet dźwięku* [A Small Alphabet of Sound] written by the curator of the section, Jan Topolski, whose aim was to present the basic terms linked with film sound analysis (Topolski, 2012, pp. 221–231).

<sup>41</sup> This term was coined by Professor Henryk Kuźniak when he described his own artistic activities in designing sound for the film *Na wylot* [Through] (1972, dir. Grzegorz Królikiewicz) (Kuźniak, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> A comment must be made here regarding the very poor quality of the translation. While translating such a demanding work drawing from many artistic disciplines is certainly a very demanding task, the publisher should have submitted the text to a film sound specialist for revision. As it was not the case, the Polish text at times departs a great deal from Michel Chion’s original argument.

and directors. Another advantage of the survey was the selection of twelve contemporary films, all produced in 2014–2015, which clearly showed that the creative potential of sound is still being explored, developed and utilised, which adds to the broadening of the definition of documentary films as instances of “creative interpretation of reality”.<sup>43</sup>

In 2015, at the same Camerimage festival, the Camerimage Special Prize for the cinematographer with an “exceptional visual sensitivity” went to the eminent American sound and image editor, Walter Murch. This is a telling choice: while the film industry seems to insist on separating these two professions, Walter Murch combines them in a masterful way. He is a multiple-Academy Award winner, including the Oscar for best editing and sound editing in Anthony Minghella’s *The English Patient* (1996). During his stay in Bydgoszcz, Murch gave talks and participated in meetings, where both image and sound-related issues were discussed.<sup>44</sup>

Admittedly, as of yet there hasn’t been a festival focused uniquely on film sound; nevertheless, there are many popular events dedicated to film music. Next to local events focused on particular artists or composers<sup>45</sup> there are large international events of the kind. Among the most important are PGiNG Transatlantyk Festival (formerly: Transatlantyk International Film and Music Festival) and the Film Music Festival in Cracow. The former, initiated in 2006 by Jan A.P. Kaczmarek, the Academy Award winner in 2005 for his music score for the film *Finding Neverland* (dir. Marc Foster), is meant to provide an “artistic platform which utilises music and film to strengthen the bonds between society, art and environment, stimulating discussion on current social issues” (Transatlantyk.org). Aside from film screenings and music events, the organisers offer a vast array of educational activities, such as meetings with artists (including composers), masterclasses and workshops for professional filmmakers;<sup>46</sup> there are also workshops addressed at children, teenagers and people with visual disabilities, as well as discussion panels<sup>47</sup> (Transatlantyk.org). It is also worth mentioning the yearly contests for composers: the Transatlantyk Instant Composition Contest, consisting of simultaneous

<sup>43</sup> The same idea lies behind DocFilmMusic International Competition – a relatively new event, though already viewed as prestigious, which has been organised for the last five years as part of the Krakow Film Festival. It is “the festival’s youngest contest, bringing together ten music documentaries from all over the world. DocFilmMusic proves that music documentary as a genre does not need to be limited to biopics on particular artists or groups – it can also offer unconventional formal experiments, interesting new approaches and journeys into yet deeper music stories” (Krakowfilmfestival.pl).

<sup>44</sup> This unique combination of competences can also be seen in his most popular book: *In the Blink of an Eye* (1995). In the book, the narrative juxtaposes comments on image and sound editing, focusing especially on their effect on the viewers.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Krzysztof Komeda Film Music Festival, with its 8<sup>th</sup> edition organised in 2016. More details at: Fmfkk.pl.

<sup>46</sup> The full list of workshops offered during last year’s edition of the festival is available on the website Transatlantyk.org. From the perspective of the present discussion, it is especially worth mentioning the analytical workshop titled *Alice in Danny Elfman’s Wonderland: A Fantastic Combination of Music and Image*.

<sup>47</sup> The panel on audiobook sales titled *Film without Image: Radio Plays in Action* is especially worth noticing.

impromptu compositions of music to accompany a film fragment selected by the jury, as well as the Transatlantyk Film Music Competition, consisting of preparing and delivering original music to accompany a pre-selected film fragment (Transatlantyk.org).

While Transatlantyk seems addressed mostly at professionals, the Film Music Festival in Cracow is popular among film viewers especially enthusiastic about music. Co-organised by the RMF Classic radio channel, the festival has earned an excellent international reputation; as a result, guests include eminent filmmakers and film music composers from all over the world. Next to amazing live concerts (accompanied by screenings of films for which the music was originally composed), young composers can enjoy masterclasses and various workshops focused both on composing and producing film music. They are also welcome to enter the prestigious Young Talent Award contest – the winners have the chance to present their work to the festival audience but also to representatives of the national and international film and music industry. Apart from the workshops, the festival offers many other attractions for various age groups, including workshops and concerts addressed at the youngest viewers, as part of the action FMF 4 Kids, whose aim is to “introduce children to the world of film music, shaping their interests and sensitivity” (Krakow.pl). Significantly, the festival’s organiser (Kraków Festival Office) also carries out minor activities between subsequent editions of the festival, organising events not limited only to film music.

Next to festival concerts, an increasing number of special events focused on one particular artist (usually a composer) or topic (e.g. *Star Wars* music or James Bond franchise music) have appeared. One such example is *Hans Zimmer. A Film Music Concert* – the event was originally planned for November 2015, but huge interest inspired the decision to take the show on tour in 2016. It is worth noticing that such concerts are organised in large arenas with several thousand seats, and all the (rather expensive) tickets are sold out well before the events. Among other events scheduled for November 2016 there is the cycle *John Williams Tribute Show* – this time organised in Wrocław. Apart from special events dedicated to eminent artists there are popular shows combining popular film music hits, not limited to any one composer. Among such initiatives are: Film Music Concert series<sup>48</sup> and concerts of the Polish Film Music Orchestra conducted by Przemysław Pasternak,<sup>49</sup> whose repertoire includes popular songs from Polish films. Many people also buy records with film soundtracks.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> More details available on the website [Koncertfilmowy.pl](http://Koncertfilmowy.pl).

<sup>49</sup> More details available on the website [Polmus.com](http://Polmus.com).

<sup>50</sup> Especially those from Hollywood films; nevertheless, there are notable exceptions, e.g. the soundtrack from the film *Excentrycy, czyli po słonecznej stronie ulicy* [Eccentrics, or the Bright Side of the Street] (2015, dir. Janusz Majewski) sold over 15,000 copies. The success of both the record and the film (many reviewers commented on the role and quality of its music) inspired the creation of a musical based on jazz standards composed for the film (*Król Swingu* [The King of Swing] directed by Sebastian Gonciarz, music directed by Wiesław Pieregorólka, which is planned to premiere on 8 April 2016 at Hala Stulecia concert hall in Wrocław).

Another type of initiative aimed at promoting film music are silent film screenings with live accompaniment, which are becoming increasingly popular and are organised more and more often both by local cinemas and as live film music tours. Arguably, such initiatives prove that visual and sound layers of film are separate entities; nevertheless, considering the multiplicity of strategies applied by contemporary artists to supplement silent films with sound or music, these may prove a perfect point of departure for a discussion on the changing role of music (and sound in general) in films.

Among the most interesting events of the kind are the Silent Cinema Festival, a cyclical event held at the Iluzjon cinema in Warsaw, and the yearly Silent Film Festival at Kino Pod Baranami in Cracow. An interesting grassroots initiative is the avant-garde group Niemy Movie<sup>51</sup> [Silent Movie], which designs sound (not limited to music!) for various silent films and presents their work upon invitation in cinemas<sup>52</sup> and other cultural/entertainment institutions (e.g. various clubs in Warsaw).

Film sound education is not limited, however, to promoting film music and transmitting knowledge about it. Apart from the thematic sections and related film screenings mentioned above, there are multiple local initiatives focused on film sound in general. Among those, it is especially worth noticing the educational activity of the National Audiovisual Institute (NInA) in Warsaw. In autumn 2015 the Institute hosted a series of film screenings and meetings with authors of the best documentary and feature films of the year under the joint title: *The Buzz about Polish Film*. The project's curator, film journalist Aleksandra Salwa, invited film directors and sound editors who acquainted the audience with the intricacies of film sound design. Despite the curator's doubts regarding her competence regarding film sound,<sup>53</sup> the discussions proved a considerable success; especially due to their accessibility and simplicity of terminology used, which allowed every audience member to follow the argument. The event's huge popularity was confirmed when there were not enough seats to accommodate all the people eager to participate; another visible mark of success were the long discussions with guests, running late into the evening and often transcending the topic of film sound aesthetics.

There are also multiple industry initiatives aimed at raising the awareness and level of knowledge regarding film sound among professional filmmakers. A leading initiative of the kind is the Film 1,2 Society, especially popular among young filmmakers. Following the sound designer Paulina Bocheńska's lead, cyclical film sound workshops are held in Lodz in cooperation with Toya Studios. The workshops are open to all candidates who can justify their interest. Among workshop leaders, discussing various issues linked with film sound (through case studies, talks, workshops, Q&A sessions), are eminent specialists such as Jacek Hamela,

<sup>51</sup> More details available on the website [NiemyMovie.com](http://NiemyMovie.com).

<sup>52</sup> E.g. the cycle *Niemy Movie* at the Praha Cinema ([Kinopraha.pl](http://Kinopraha.pl)).

<sup>53</sup> She expressed those doubts in a conversation we had, stressing that her main goal was to initiate a discussion on a subject that seems slightly overlooked in the general discussion on films.

Agata Chodyra, Marcin Lenarczyk, Michał Kosterkiewicz, Piotr Knop and many others. Significantly, the workshops also involve meetings with film producers, lawyers, film editors and scriptwriters, during which participants can discuss various aspects of film sound design and editing. This initiative is reflected during the “Youth and Film” Film Debut Festival in Koszalin, where filmmakers invited by Toya Studios conduct workshops and discussion panels focused on sound in films.

Considering the high, often world-class level of artistic achievements presented by Polish film sound and music designers, the negative aspects of film sound and music education discussed in the first part of the present article must give us pause. There can be no doubt that much hard work is needed to improve the current state of affairs, which would allow future generations to acquire the necessary visual, conversational, but also aural skills in the process of education. While music is generally very important in terms of harmonious development of human beings, it is especially crucial with respect to film education.

The current state of affairs regarding film sound and music education leaves much to be desired. Most importantly, we need to promote general sound and music education, teaching young people to receive and decode various aural stimuli. As far as films are concerned, it is important to explain the coexistence and interdependence of the two layers of audiovisual works: the image and the sound, both to audiences (including teachers, film educators and students) and to filmmakers. While existing initiatives give some hope for improvement, legislators still need to change their attitude to general sound education.

As Leopold Blaustein pointed out in 1936:

it may be easy to perceive films – but it is not equivocal with perceiving their aesthetic value. The latter demands certain aesthetic education [...]. While taste may develop independently in a few individuals, most young people can acquire it only as a result of teachers’ active work in shaping their perception of films (Depta, 1979, p. 83).

Blaustein’s words, still relevant in 2016, are especially true when it comes to aural education and aesthetic competence with reference to film sound. Paraphrasing Michel Chion’s words, it is not enough to “see” films; in the age of technological progress, following the sound revolution in cinema, and constant broadening of aesthetic horizons, films must be also – and perhaps above all – heard. Only active reception on both these levels offers the chance to absorb film works in their entirety and perceive them fully and completely.

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### Summary

The paper presents a comprehensive overview of the issues of the broadly defined audial education (how to listen), with special regard to its meaning in the need of film education. Beginning with comments on the specificity of contemporary audiovisual culture and on the role of education in the matters of listening (including music education) in general as well as professional education, the author analyses the consequences of this state concerning incomplete film perception and interpretation resulting from underestimating the role of its audial layer. In the second part of the article the author points to and describes certain important initiatives aimed at the improvement of the previously shown negative situation.

**Keywords:** film literacy, film education