

**Composer as a storyteller,
Music as the spoiler.**

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INDEX

1.1	Abstract	3
1.2	Synopsis	3
1.3	Composer, Director and general background of making the film ...	6
Music score:		
2.1	The sound: landscape/ atmosphere created, harmonic language, Instrumentation.....	9
2.2	Score Narrative analysis: themes, motives and significant cues ...	11
2.3	Cue List	15
3.1	Conclusions	22

Abstract

In this paper I will try to examine through the Film “The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus”, whether the fact in which the composer knows the ending of the movie, reflects in the music from the very start.

In order to do that I will start with a short synopsis of the film, I will then get to know the creative souls; the director and the two composers, a short background of the movie will then take place for giving the prospective and a certain taste of the film unusual circumstances. After do so, I will examine the music referring it as “sound”, as whole auditory experience, though relations between narrative to music, themes and variations and instrumentation. I hope that with the knowledge and the information I’ll will gain about the film and it’s creators and by going through the themes and the course they’re moving in the film, I will have enough material to state whether the music was telling the end from the start or not.

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus

Synopsis

Our story begins just before Valentina turns sixteen, “the age of counsel” in her words. It’s London and the picture is dark, the weather is awful, the characters seem as if they just came out of a nice dirty deep in a big pile of waste. Alcohol, filth and torn rags as if cloths to wear. Smoke, fog and a big monstrous carriage-caravan- rolling theatre all in which follow the story from the start gives us the viewers a sense uneasiness, uncertainty, mystery and magic.

Doctor Parnassus, Valentina's father, is immortal and a bating kind of man. He is immortal because he likes to bet and he likes to bet because he's immortality. One night in his old carriage, Doctor Parnassus takes Valentina for a talk. He wants to tell her the truth, a tale that will reveal how he became immortal.

A few decades ago Parnassus was a young monk who lived on top of a big abandoned mountain, his believe and his routine was very simple and like the rest of the monks there all he did was telling the eternal story, the story that sustains the universe. One day, a strange looking man who's called Mr. Nick came to the monastery; he wore a suit and a top hat, he smoked a cigar and used what seemed to be an old recorder. After hearing from Parnassus his believe and the reason he and the monks are staying there, he proved him wrong, in a way. Or at least gave him some food for thought by silencing the monastery and stopping the eternal story from being told. This action shook Parnassus world and that's when he made his first bet with the strange looking man, who turned out to be the devil itself. This bet led him to a series of other bets, which caused him to win his immortality, his slavery and later to loosing his daughter at the age of sixteen.

Doctor Parnassus doesn't get to the part in the story about betting on his daughter because the carriage stops and Valentina runs out to find a man hanging by his throat from a bridge. With the help of Percy, the Doctor's assistant and Anton, who's another actor in the Doctor's show, they save Tony who's about to take a lead role in the bet between Mr. Nick to the Doctor.

Tony, a charismatic crook who stole money from a charity organization and got involved with the local mafia, lies about his true identity to the carriage personal and starts to take part as an actor in their daily routine. The daily

routine of Doctor Parnassus and the others is having a street show by opening the caravan to a small theatre and offering the spectators to go inside Doctor Parnassus's Imaginarium. Which means, walking through a magical door that leads to the Doctor's mind and by that exploring your imagination, getting to know it and experiencing it in an exciting yet dangerous way.

Charismatic Tony brings a new and fresh vibe to the unsuccessful show of the Doctor and the others. With his sharp tongue and his unique charm he manages to make the imaginarium show just a tad more appealing to the public. Doctor Parnassus and Valentina are swept away by Tony, they have complete confidence that he will give them the chance they need in life right now; Valentina falls for him and wants to believe he'll take her away from her twisted reality of living with her father and his midget in a crazy moving theatre to a sane, normal and stable life. The Doctor believes that Mr. Nick sent Tony as a part of another bet that might give him a chance of saving his daughter.

Mr. Nick does notice the new presents of Tony and offers Parnassus another bet with a chance; the first one who will win five souls will take Valentina. Every person that decides to participate the show of the Doctor and goes inside the imaginarium will enter his own imagination; experience a world of magic that comes into real life. In this experience, walking in the imagination, among many fantastic and beautiful things the participant will come across; there will be a decision to make, a choice between right and wrong, good or bad. That decision will define if the soul goes to the Doctor or Mr. Nick and will later affect Valentina's fortune.

The Composers, Director and general background of making the film

Jeffrey W. “Jeff” Danna

Born 1964, Jeff is a Canadian composer. Although primarily noted for his film music, Jeff is an active TV composer and in addition wrote two albums of Celtic music, influenced by the Celtic folk tales of “*Deirdre*” and “*Liadain and Curithir*”. Both of these two Albums were written by Jeff and his older brother Mychael Danna, a collaboration which went on, in different formats, on few projects such as: “*Tideland*”, “*Life of Pie*”, “*Antwone Fisher*” and “*Green Dragon*”. Jeff, who began his musical journey on the age of eight as a piano student, later to become a guitarist as well, was making his way as a music performer. An unfortunate hand injury at the age of twenty-three opened him a path to become the composer that he is now- days.

Other Film and TV series scores include a long list of divergent projects such as: “*All Saints Day*”, “*Fracture*”, “*Resident Evil: Apocoyse*”, “*Miss Spider*”, “*Silent Hill*”, “*Closing the Ring*” and “*Lakeview Terrace*”.

Mychael Danna

Born 1958, an academy Award- winning composer, mostly known for his score for the film “*Life of Pi*”, Mychael Danna’s music language is mostly unique for it’s interesting, evocative and rich textures of blending eastern and western musical worlds. Mychael studied at the University of Toronto; there he earned the school’s inaugural Glenn Gould Composition award. During that time he also began scoring for student theatre groups as well as starting his artistic

partnership with Egoyan. Mychael has scored all of Egoyan's films since 1987's "Family Viewing".

Mychael earned the 2013 Golden Globe and the 2013 Oscar for scoring Ang Lee's "Life of Pi" and his credits include a long list of other films such as: "Moneyball", "Capote", "Mira Nair on Vanity Fair", "Monsoon Wedding", "Shattered Glass" and "Little Miss Sunshine", for which he shared a Grammy Award nomination for Best Compilation Soundtrack Album.

Danna says his approach is to "making music an integral part of the storytelling, not simply repeating what is happening onscreen, but adding unexpected dimension and insight that enrich the experience of the director's vision".

Director and general background of making the film

Terence Vance "Terry" Gilliam

Film director, screenwriter, animator and actor; Gilliam is a unique figure in the world of visual art. Born (1940) and raised in Minnesota in what he describes as a Huckleberry Finn/ Tom Sawyer type of childhood, later his family and him moved to LA when he was eleven years old, Terry started to draw his first cartoons as a kid at that time. He went to Occidental College, studying Physics and afterwards changing to Politics. At the last year of college Terry send a share of his college magazine work to the Magazine "help!" in New York, they liked what he sent and that was the first step in the world of visual arts.

Gilliam was part of the Monty Python troupe as an actor and as an animator; his animations had a special role creating the visual concept and language of the successful group. By the time the group broke up, each going each own direction, Gilliam gained enough experience and knowledge to direct and screen write his trilogy about “the age of man”, featuring “*Time Bandits*” (1981), “*Brazil*” (1985) and the “*Adventures of Baron Munchausen*” (1988). Additional credits include: “*Tideland*” (2005), “*The Meaning of Life*” (1983), “*Life of Brian*” (1979), “*Twelve Monkeys*” (1995).

Gilliam’s theme in his work throughout the years is discussing or putting to awareness the question of reality and imagination.

“Well I really want to encourage a kind of fantasy, a kind of magic. I love the term magic realism, whoever invented it – I do actually like it because it says certain things. It’s about expanding how you see the world. I think we live in an age where we’re just hammered to think this is what the world is. Television’s saying, everybody saying ‘That’s the world’. And it’s not the world. The world is a million possible things.” Terry Gilliam, Salman Rushdie talks with Terry Gilliam.

When Gilliam describes the process of creating the film “*The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*”, he explains that conceiving the idea or theme of the movie came from the vision of the Caravan of Doctor Parnassus. “A strange oversize wagon comes in and opens up, kind of like a fold- out dolls house or a theatre... and I thought it’s just magic. Pulled by

horses, it doesn't belong in our world. If you go to it, you might discover things about yourself". In that wagon there's the Imaginarium, "a place you go through that mirror to discover whether you have an imagination to begin with, and then let it flower, let it grow, let it take you places..."

During the filming of the movie, star actor Heath Ledger (Tony) died of accidental intoxication from prescription drugs. When Gilliam was informed by a phone call that Ledger had died his initial thought was to cancel all the shooting. After giving it some time and thought he decided to keep on shooting the movie and dedicate it to Ledger, it was then when he recruited Johnny Depp, Collin Farrell and Jude Law to replace Ledger by using the concept of giving Tony (Ledger's character) different and transferred versions in different magical worlds while keeping the footage of Ledger to represent Tony in the real world.

"So we create a world that isn't true to a realistic naturalistic world, but is truthful" Terry Gilliam.

2.1 The sound:

Landscape created, harmonic language, Instrumentation.

As there is a certain trademark to certain directors, as for composers or any artist in general. I believe there is a certain sound, a unique and complete auditory experience, which represent certain movies. The sound of a movie is all the elements that complete the spectators' auditory experience; the harmonic language, instrumentation, sound effects and sound design, texture and relation

between dialogue to other audio elements, spotting and usage of music during the film.

“The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus” is a movie that brings a sound that works very well with the image. The movie as only a visual is very complex and even Samuel Hadida, the producer mentioned that it was an big challenge to try a visualized the movie when it was presented by Gilliam to him. Costumes, makeup, setting and of course the animation are making the movie what it is. In order to accompany these great colours and visuals on the screen, the sound accordingly is varied and dynamic.

Though the entire sound track of the film we hear mainly an orchestra and orchestral scores fro the scenes. The ensembles are changing from cue to cue, but there’s a certain balance in between three instrument sections: woodwinds, brass and strings. All three mentioned are very dominant, each one of the section gets leading and accompanying parts during the score, in addition an occasional use of percussion and Celtic folk instruments adds more variation. Although the picture and plot keep on changing to either the reality world or the Imaginarium and the visuals changes from to animation and back in a very sudden way, the music stays very coherent and adjust to the picture, using the same instrumentation in both worlds.

The harmony stays tonal throughout the film, melodies and themes are generated, phrases and harmonic progressions, most of themes of the score are written in a minor scale but still there’s a certain flavor that comes from the melodies, the orchestration and the contemporary use tension which gives the movie its unique sound.

2.2 Score Narrative analysis:

Themes, motives and significant cues.

Main Theme

The first time the main theme is mentioned is at the first time we come across the Imaginarium and its powers, the brass play just the first three notes of the theme as dissonant clusters. When we leave the Imaginarium the melody plays a bit longer and in a more tragic and expressive way by the celli.

The first time the main theme presented is just a fragment of it. Just a motive, the brass playing the first three notes accompanying by strings as we first enter the imagenarium and it's not the only time this theme appear in that way. The main theme walks us throughout the entire film and apart from changing key, tempo, instrumentation and harmony it's a very common way of using the theme to generate the plot in different variations, just by using a fragment of it to remind us the viewers the context of the scene.

Opening Theme

Starts as celli duet, this theme open the film and gives it a heavy and dark flavor.

The image displays a musical score for the opening theme, consisting of four staves: Cello I, Cello II, Violin I (Vc. I), and Violin II (Vc. II). The music is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Cello I part begins with a melodic line of quarter notes, while the Cello II part provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Violin I and Violin II parts enter with a more complex, flowing melody. The score is presented in a clean, professional layout with clear notation and staff lines.

sound effects and stands as a contrast to the real world. The melody is played by the trumpet, doubled by the violins and accompanied with Celesta, timpani, celli, choir, chimes, woodwinds and brass. The trumpet that reaches its high register, the triadic harmony that offers tension and release and the major scale it's playing at. This theme is stating the obvious- the Imaginarium is a good place to be, it's welcoming and the music is very bright and smooth.



Mr. Nick's Theme

Mr. Nick's Theme is a theme that correspond Mr. Nick's appearance, it's instrumentation and it's narrative approach to the visual are solid and don't varies as much as the other themes in the picture. Danna's (both composers) approach to Mr. Nick (the devil) follows the subtext that Gilliam is transmitting during the movie. The devil isn't that bad, it's just cool. Like Tom Waits who plays it. When Mr. Nick is there the theme is played, a slow and sensual jazz-waltz, the melody is played by the tenor saxophone in a very expressive way in it's higher register, a accompanied by a drum- set (brushes) and a walking bass (double-bass) which add to it's jazzy, rugged, dark-smokey jazz club in New York sort of feeling.



When Parnassus tells Valentina about his first encounter with the devil, we see a black-coated rider, covered to protect himself from an awful snow- storm, riding a black horse on a very high an abandoned mountain; a very powerful image. This image is being contrasted by a dark jazz waltz, Mr. Nick's theme. This scene sets up the mystery and the complexity of the devil in the plot. We hear the dark shde of the music, we know its dark and Mr. Nick is not a saint but we still like him for the tension, contrast and humor he's bringing to the table.

Immortality Theme



This theme appears when there is a scene involving Mr. Nick, Parnassus and Tony; characters that bring the death and life tension to the plot. Tony is playing with death; his whistle gives him the possibility off living between these two worlds. In the scene when Tony wakes up in the back of the caravan the immortality theme is played in a humorous way by the strings (pizzicato), vibes and accordion for example and when the theme is played in a dramatical more orchestral way Mr. Nick and Parnassus are taken the lead role. The theme is played in a minor key (the first time in F# minor) and most off the times it will be played as a direct continuation to Mr. Nicks theme.

Valentina's Theme and Anton's Theme

Both of these themes appear only a couple of times and are presented in a very straightforward way. Valentina's theme is in a major key, very lyric and sweet, where Anton's theme has a melancholic character which works with Anton's image as the day-dreamer and in love flavor he adds to the story.

Cue List

Cue name	Thematic material	Instrumentation and comments	Cue Time
1. Opening cue	Opening Theme	Strings, Bassoon, harpsichord, harp.	0: 46- 1:42
2. Introduction to the show	Caravan tune	Tuba, trombone, trumpet, violin, piano.	2:17- 3:53
3. 1 st time in the Imaginarium	Main Theme / Main Theme	(A) Strings, celesta/music box, brass reminding a motive from theme. (B) Creepy pads, wood sounds, choir, Mr. Nick's-blues piano. (C) Cello solo, strings, bassoon	(A) 4:53- 5:50 (B) 6:04- 8:02 (C) 8:20-8:40
4. Kid in the Imaginarium	Imaginarium Theme	Celesta/music box, strings, choir, chimes, woodwinds, brass. Imaginarium theme played by the Trumpet.	10:30- 11:20

5. Mr. Nick's first appearance	Mr. Nick's Theme / Main theme	Woodwinds, strings, Brass, alto flute and flute playing a motive of the theme. Sax plays Mr. Nick's theme, drum-set with brushes, double-bass pizzicato.	12:49- 14:14
6 Anton and Valentina	Anton's theme	Alto flute, bassoon, piano, strings, harp, Anton's theme played by the flute.	15:00- 16:30
7 Parnassus's Tale	Mr. Nick's theme / Immortality Theme	Strings, drums with brushes, sax, horns, bass drum, brass, synths, choir. Sax plays both themes and horns doubles on the Immortality Theme.	17:15- 18:10
8 Mr. Nick	Mr. Nick's theme	WW, strings, Brass, Sax with Mr. Nick's Theme, drums, clarinet with Mr. Nick's theme pizz, doublebass.	18:30- 19:40
9 "My first bet with the Devil"	Main theme	Appearance of motive- harp and after with piano, strings, celesta, accordion plays the theme.	21:52- 22:30
10 First encounter with Tony	Mr. Nick theme	Bass drum, brass, strings, Woodwinds, Mr. nicks motive with sax and ensemble.	(A) 24:00- 25:22 26:06- 27:20

11 Tony meets the gang	Immortality theme	Vibes, woodwinds, snare, accordion, Celesta, strings, piano, low strings pizzicato.	28:00- 29:00
12 Valentina appears	Valentina's theme/ Opening theme	Flute plays Valentina's theme, harp, bassoon, pizzicato celi, accordion, woodwinds, strings, plucked Celtic harp, Opening theme played by the violin and the bassoon.	29:30- 31:35
13 Parnassus is Drunk	Caravan Tune	Guitar, piano, brass, strings.	31:36-32:37
14 Half the price	Caravan Tune	Guitar, piano, brass, strings.	34:00-35:43
15 Anton is hurt	Anton's Theme	Strings and WW	35:50- 36:20
16 Mr. Nick's last bet	Mr. Nick's theme/ Immortality theme	Strings, double bass pizz, Tenor Sax, brass, oboe, glock.	36:25- 38:15
17 Tony's Identity	Main theme	Strings, mentioning the main theme with the flute, counter melody with the violin, celesta accompanying, timpani	39: 49- 41:30
18 Tony's upset, Parnassus and Percy.	Main theme	Double bass, bassoon, strings, Celtic harp, mentioning the main theme, harp, strings pizz, Percy theme, main theme with the clarinet, contra melody cello.	44:20- 46:05

19 Two girls at the same time	Caravan Tune	Tuba, trombone, trumpet, violin, piano.	46:05- 47:42
20 Forced inside the Imaginarium. Anton and Tony	Main theme/ Mr. Nick's theme/ Anton's theme	Piano, brass, strings, main theme fast played with horns and trombones, snare drum, harmonica playing the theme afterward. Mr. Nick's theme on the sax. (B) Main theme with the cello, accompanying by strings. Anton's theme clarinet, harp, flute, strings, chimes, piano.	(A) 47:42-49:00 (B) 49:15-
21 Parnassus's Tale about Valentna's mother. Tony and Valentina	Main theme	(A) Theme in the accordion, mentioning theme violin, brass clusters/ fluttered. Theme violin, major variation (harmonic change), strings tremolo mainly. (B) Clarinet and oboe with melody, harp, strings, harmonica, accordion, flute.	(A) 52:30-54:00 (B) 54:34-55:15
22 Anton running away	- Anton's theme - New source music - Mentioning Beethoven's 9th	(A) Flute solo, extreme dynamic changes strings, low string pizzicato, Anton theme and then soft WW.	(A) 58: 04-58:32 (B) 58:35-59:30
23 Tony in the	Imaginarium	Imaginarium theme	1:01:40-

imaginarium	Theme / Main theme	trumpet, timpani, strings, violin with theme, brass, Piano, bandoneon, violin, harmonica, chimes, strings, accordion, harp, clarinet, choir. Mr. Nick's blues-piano, main theme with the dead on the violin, piano accompanying, melodic and harmonic change, brass, mentioning the theme which was played in the beginning of the cue.	1:07:28
24 Rich woman after Imaginarium	Mr. Nick's theme	Mr. Nick's motive with the harp and violin, bad guys come- brass, piano, doublebass, woodwinds.	1:07:45
25 Chasing Tony in the imaginarium	Chasing Tony Theme	Melody on clarinet, strings, oboe, piano, brass.	1:10:20- 1:12:42
26 Still in the Imaginarium		Strings, bassoon, brass, clarinet, mentioning irish music- whistle. Police song- piano, woodwinds, and marching band.	1:13:00- 1:15:45
27 Tony to Anton- the truth	Anton's Theme	Woodwinds, accordion, harp, flute, clarinet, harmonica, strings.	1:18:50- 1:20:00
28 Knock of Mr. Nick	Mr, Nick's Theme /	Strings, bassoon, clarinet and oboe, Mr. Nick's theme	1:21:15- 1:26:45

	Immortality Theme / Valentina's Theme	with bassoon and later with sax, immortality theme with clarinet. Valentina's theme played by woodwinds, main theme played by strings, Alto flute, harp.	
29 Don't believe what you read in the news papers.		Brass, strings	1:29:00- 1:30:20
30 Tony and Valentina on the boat.	Main Theme	Alto flute, strings, harp, theme with different harmony.	1:31:10- 1:31:40
31 9 th of Beethoven and choir	Source music		1:32:50- 1:34:00
32 Small Anton in the Imaginarium	Chasing Tony Theme/ Main theme	(A) Woodwinds dissonant, brass. Low strings, (B) chasing Tony theme by piano and brass (C) main theme played by strings accompanying by piano and woodwinds. Brass mentioning the main theme. (D) Tango: piano, clarinet and sax with melody, vibes, percussion (highs- shaker and etc.) , woodwinds	(A) 1:34:25 - 1:35:40 (B) 1:36:07 (C) 1:37:50 (D) 1:39:10
33 Mr. Nick and Parnassus on the cliff.	Mr. Nick's Theme / Immortality	Brass, strings, sax is playing Mr. Nick's theme, drum set with brushes, walking bass,	1:40:00

	Theme	strings, high pitched whistle, brass, bass drum, timpani.	
34 Parnassus lost in desert	Main theme	Woodwinds, strings, Main theme played by English horn, bassoon, harpsichord, glock, strings. Main theme by bassoon, horns, oboe and strings.	1:45:45
35 Parnassus begs	Opening Theme	Cello duet	1:47:00
36 Valentina's passes by	Valentina's Theme	The theme played by alto flute, brass, harp, strings, woodwinds.	1:47:20
37 Percy shows up	Main Theme	Cello plays the theme bassoon, chimes, harp, strings.	1:49:20
38 Back to start	Caravan Tune	Brass, guitar, piano, double bass, trumpet and violin with melody.	1:49:40

Conclusion

In this paper I tried to examine whether the music in the movie “The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus” reveals or suggests the end of the movie before we as viewers are watching it.

As composers we experience a unique task, telling the story, supporting the moment but also we give our own input and interpretation. While we know the characters and the plot in a way no viewer will ever know, we live with these characters and images from the movie and we go on a special journey with them. Sometimes we develop feeling for them because we went on a long way with the film and we also know the future of these characters and plot, this is where sometime we write music to describe the subtext and sometimes we are even ask to do so.

In several projects I did this past year with a few directors this subject came up, supporting the moment or supporting the things which yet to be revealed in the movie. Some directors sometimes will ask for it, to write music that brings a different and hidden significance and some of them will ask you to support the scene as if it was the only thing existed. In the score of the film “The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus” I came to notice that the music mostly support the moment, if the scene has a fast and upbeat tempo the music will be act accordingly; in a dramatic, tensed and dark scene the music will feel the same. No contrast what so ever. The dialogue in the film though, has a very present subtext and irony, it brings up many moral issues handeling mainly the way our capitalist society we live in works. Our ideal life, the race we all participate to achieve the Ikea world. The music is so ironic by being so

straightforward, as if the only the moment counts. In a way, by supporting the moment only, the music supports the subtext as well or a better way to put it is to say- by being so straightforward the music reveals the subtext of the film because its contradicted to it.

By studying the score of the film “The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus” I learned so much about instrumentation, orchestration but mainly I learned how to approach the image and how to interpret the motion of the plot. I think this is always the greatest challenge of all- telling the story.