



Music Analysis of Danny Elfman's

# *“Edward Scissorhands”*

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# 1. Introduction

Danny Elfman is undoubtedly one of the most important film composers in these decades. His famous works include *Batman*, *The Simpsons*' theme, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Men in Black* and *Spider-Man*, etc.

Among all these great works, his favorite one is the 1990 movie *Edward Scissorhands*. "I guess I got it right for *Edward Scissorhands*' considering the incredible number of times I've had it ripped off and the number of lawsuits I've had suing people who have ripped it off – if that's any form of compliment."<sup>1</sup>

Tim Burton, director of the film, also cites it as epitomizing his most personal work.<sup>2</sup> In fact, this romantic dark fantasy movie received lots of positive feedback when it was released, and also was a financial success.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate why both Elfman and Burton would consider this film as their favorite one, and what are the success factors of the music. We will go through the basic information of the composer and the movie first, then analyze the soundscape and the film score.

## 2. Danny Elfman's Musical Background

### Early Life

Danny Elfman was born in Los Angeles, California, in May of 1953, the son of Blossom Elfman who is a writer and teacher, and Milton Elfman who is a teacher in the Air Force. He grew up in a Jewish family, and spent much of his time in the local cinema. He started a ska band in high school, and later followed his brother Richard Elfman to France, where he performed with an avant-garde musical theater group. He eventually returned home to the United States, where he started to take Balinese music lessons.

### First Film Score

In 1972, Richard Elfman founded the American new wave band, originally called *The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo*. They played several shows throughout the 1970s. Later, Richard left the band to become a filmmaker, and created the film *Forbidden Zone* based on their stage performances. Danny Elfman took this chance to compose his first film score.

### Relationship with Tim Burton

In 1985, directors Tim Burton and Paul Reubens made their first feature film, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, and invited Elfman to write the score. Elfman was nervous at first because of his lack of formal training. Fortunately, Steven Bartek, the guitarist and arranger from Oingo Boingo, helps Elfman in orchestrating the music. Therefore he can emulate the mood of his favorite composers such as Nino Rota and Bernard Herrmann.

Elfman immediately developed a close relationship with Burton after their first collaboration. We can tell this from the following table.

Year	Film	Composer	Role of Tim Burton
1985	Pee-wee's Big Adventure	Danny Elfman	Director
1988	Beetlejuice	Danny Elfman	Director
1989	Batman	Danny Elfman	Director
1990	Edward Scissorhands	Danny Elfman	Director/ Producer/ Writer
1992	Batman Returns	Danny Elfman	Director/ Producer
1993	The Nightmare Before Christmas	Danny Elfman	Producer/ Writer
1994	Cabin Boy	Steve Bartek	Producer
1994	Ed Wood	Howard Shore	Director/ Producer
1995	Batman Forever	Elliot Goldenthal	Producer
1996	James and the Giant Peach	Randy Newman	Producer
1996	Mars Attacks!	Danny Elfman	Director/ Producer
1999	Sleepy Hollow	Danny Elfman	Director
2001	Planet of the Apes	Danny Elfman	Director
2003	Big Fish	Danny Elfman	Director
2005	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	Danny Elfman	Director
2005	Corpse Bride	Danny Elfman	Director/ Producer
2007	Sweeney Todd	Stephen Sondheim	Director
2009	9	Deborah Lurie	Producer
2010	Alice in the Wonderland	Danny Elfman	Director
2012	Dark Shadows	Danny Elfman	Director
2012	Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter	Danny Elfman	Producer
2012	Frankenweenie	Danny Elfman	Director/ Producer/ Writer
2014	Big Eyes	Danny Elfman	Director/ Producer

Table 2.1: Filmography of Tim Burton

As highlighted in red, Elfman scored all but two of Burton's directed films: *Ed Wood* which was under production while Elfman and Burton were having a serious disagreement, and *Sweeney Todd* which is a ready-made musical.

Their relationship was described by Larry Rohter, an American journalist, as this:

"In a recording studio one afternoon, a shrunken head nicknamed Uncle Bill looked down on Mr. Elfman and Mr. Burton from the console as a 79-piece orchestra recorded a 90-

second cue to accompany a key scene in the movie (which is referring to *Edward Scissorhands*). Communication between composer and director was as much by glances, raised eyebrows, and guffaws as by words. It is not always that easy, Mr. Elfman said." <sup>3</sup>

## **Musical Instruments Played**

In the Mystic Knights band, Elfman played trombone, violin, guitar and percussion, which was like a little bit of everything. With Oingo Boingo, he was a guitarist and singer. He considers himself as a mimicker when learning instruments, and trained a pair of good ears during the process.<sup>4</sup>

## **Music Influences**

Elfman's music is influenced by modern classical composers such as Bela Bartok, Philip Glass, Sergei Prokofiev, Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, Igor Stravinsky and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Other influences based in film music include Bernard Hermann, Nino Rota, Max Steiner, David Tamkin and Franz Waxman.

## **Film Scoring Style**

Elfman's compositions are usually quirky, odd, and weird. His sound is perfect for goofy comedies and extraordinary characters, which often appear in Tim Burton's films. Other characteristics include frequent use of haunting vocals, bells, brass and percussions. He also likes to combine orchestral sounds with electronic music, such as the main titles of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

### 3. Synopsis

Once upon a time, there was an inventor (Vincent Price) living in an old castle isolated on the hill. He had created a lot of different devices. One day, he decided to create a young boy whom he named Edward (Johnny Depp). The kind inventor took care of him and treated him as his own son. Soon the old inventor died and left Edward uncompleted.

Edward has all the essential ingredients of a human body, except a pair of real hands. Instead, he has scissorhands which gave him the ability to trim hedges, but make him very inconvenient in daily life.

He was left alone in the castle, until one day discovered by an Avon lady Peg Boggs (Dianne Weist). Peg feels pity for him and decided to bring him home, which is located in a suburbia area full of colorful ranch-houses. Edward finds himself fall in love with Peg's beautiful daughter, Kim (Winona Ryder), who is dating Jim (Anothony Michael Hall), the neighborhood bully.

Edward becomes friends with Peg's husband (Alan Arkin) and her young son Kevin (Robert Oliveri). His hedge-trimming and hairstyling abilities impress Peg's neighborhoods, especially an aging seductress named Joyce (Kathy Baker). He becomes popular in town very soon. However, a religious fanatic named Esmeralda (O-Lan Jones) thinks he is devil and urges people to repel him.

Jim takes advantage of Edward's ability to pick locks, and asks him to break into his parents' house. The burglar alarm sounds and everyone flees except Edward. He is arrested and released, and the neighborhoods begin to suspect him.

Edward also starts to realize, he can be dangerous to the others, since he is not able to even touch the others without harming them, due to the sharpness of the blades he has instead of hands. Later rumors spread and people begin to fear him and wash him away.



The whole story is told by an elderly woman (who is actually Kim in her old age) to her granddaughter in bedtime. Kim chose not to visit Edward again because she wants him to remember her as a young lady. She believes that Edward is still alive, seemingly immortal since he is not a real human being and will never old and die.

## 4. The Music and Its Context

“The thing about Tim's first four films was that I had *nothing* to go on ... They wanted it to sound like John Williams' music but I don't do that - only John Williams can do John Williams - so I had to find another language for it. Same again on *Edward Scissorhands*: there was virtually nothing to look at. All Tim's early films were like starting out in complete darkness. There wasn't a genre of film to model anything after.”

Danny Elfman<sup>5</sup>

I begin this part with Elfman's quotation regarding his early collaborations with Tim Burton. Just like other Burton's works, *Edward Scissorhands* is a special one in terms of the script, character design and set design. The macabre sense of humor, gothic tone and fantasy world established by the movie suggest Elfman to build his own style on the music.

### The Dark and Bright Scenes

There are two completely different “worlds” in the movie. One is the dark gothic castle overgrown with creepy vines that towers over the street, where Edward originally lives in. Another one is the suburban area with colorful ranch-houses, where Peg brings Edward to.

In order to emphasize the contrast between these two worlds, Elfman uses different instrumentations, orchestrations, and music styles to distinguish them. Usually the “dark” cues happen at night or indoors, and the “bright” ones vice versa,

but there are also some exceptional cases. Here we use the terms “dark” and “bright” referring to the music but not the lighting of the scenes.

Before discussing the soundscape, let’s have a look on the cue list first.

Cue	Title	Start	End	Length	Diegetic or Non-diegetic
1	Introduction (Titles)	0:00:04	0:02:44	2:40	N
2	Storytime	0:02:44	0:05:20	2:36	N
3	Delilah	0:06:21	0:07:25	1:04	D
4	O Little Town of Bethlehem	0:07:42	0:08:20	0:38	D
5	Castle on the Hill	0:08:20	0:14:36	6:16	N
6	Beautiful New World	0:15:44	0:16:40	0:56	N
7	Home Sweet Home	0:17:59	0:19:38	1:39	N
8	Housewives	0:22:54	0:23:16	0:22	N
9	Sew for Edward	0:23:16	0:23:26	0:10	N
10	Husbands	0:23:52	0:24:24	0:32	N
11	Ballet De Suburbia	0:26:42	0:27:24	0:42	N
12	Esmeralda	0:32:04	0:32:31	0:27	N
13	Cookie Factory	0:33:19	0:35:28	2:09	N
14	Blue Hawaii	0:35:28	0:36:49	1:21	D
15	Aloha 'Oe	0:36:49	0:38:15	1:26	D
16	Etiquette Lesson	0:38:15	0:39:48	1:33	N
17	It's Not Unusual	0:44:22	0:45:03	0:41	D
18	Paper Doll	0:45:21	0:45:38	0:17	N
19	Edward the Barber	0:48:35	0:51:50	3:15	N
20	Go to the Mall	0:52:58	0:53:20	0:22	N
21	Kim at the Mall	0:53:20	0:53:51	0:31	N
22	Open the Door	0:54:26	0:54:39	0:13	N
23	Talk Show Shocker	0:56:14	0:56:36	0:22	N
24	Talk Show Theme	0:56:45	0:56:51	0:06	D
25	With These Hands	0:58:15	0:59:57	1:42	D
26	After Seducing	0:59:57	1:00:15	0:18	N
27	Background Music	1:00:15	1:01:18	1:03	D
28	Heist	1:03:38	1:06:24	2:46	N
29	The Tide Turns	1:08:08	1:09:08	1:00	N
30	Apology	1:09:43	1:11:14	1:31	N
31	Rage	1:11:14	1:11:46	0:32	N
32	Kim Spies	1:14:10	1:14:33	0:23	N
33	I Saw Three Ships	1:15:02	1:15:14	0:12	D
34	O Little Town of Bethlehem	1:15:14	1:15:51	0:37	D
35	Ice Dance	1:15:51	1:17:33	1:42	N
36	Confrontation	1:17:33	1:18:00	0:27	N
37	Wandering	1:18:10	1:18:50	0:40	N
38	Rampage	1:19:04	1:19:34	0:30	N
39	We Three Kings	1:19:34	1:19:55	0:21	D
40	Devil Bush	1:19:55	1:20:12	0:17	N
41	Paranoia	1:20:38	1:21:11	0:33	N
42	Peg and Kim's Talk	1:21:11	1:22:13	1:02	N
43	Dog	1:22:35	1:23:03	0:28	N
44	Strake Out	1:23:03	1:23:41	0:38	N
45	Death!	1:23:41	1:27:07	3:26	N
46	The Plot Unfolds	1:27:42	1:30:28	2:46	N
47	Mob	1:31:24	1:34:29	3:05	N
48	Farewell	1:34:29	1:37:06	2:37	N
49	Grand Finale	1:37:18	1:40:18	3:00	N
50	End Credits	1:40:18	1:45:00	4:42	N
<b>Total Music Duration:</b>				1:06:40	(=63% of whole film)
<b>Total Non-diegetic Music:</b>				0:57:25	(=55% of whole film)

Table 4.1: Cue Sheet Information

For better analyzing purpose, I would briefly divide the non-diegetic cues (except the very short ones) into there groups.

**i. Dark:** Introduction (Main Titles), Storytime, Castle on the Hill, Esmeralda, Cookie Factory, Etiquette Lesson, Heist, The Tide Turns, Rage, Confrontation, Wandering, Rampage, Devil Bush, Paranoia, Strake Out, Death, The Plot Unfolds, Mob, Grand Finale, End Credits.

In addition to a foundation of a traditional strings/ woodwinds/ brass setting, harp and celesta are used to bring a magic feel. Choir usually joins the music in critical moments and brings climaxes. Staccato bassoon and trombone solo give a dark sense of humor. Timapni bring tension in action cues. Thematic ideas are often recalled (will be discussed in the next part), suggesting that these are the most essential cues in the movie.

Related emotions: Mysterious/ Fantasy/ Anger

**ii. Bright:** Beautiful New World, Housewives, Husbands, Ballet de Suburbia, Paper Doll, Edward the Barber.

Most of these cues happen in daytime and in the suburbia area. They are all joyful and easy to be recognized. Pizzicato strings or piano are often used to build the basic rhythmic patterns. Special instruments like accordion and castanets are used for an exotic flavor. Solo violins play fast and busy melodies to show Edward's craziness. Although these cues are usually short, they play an important role in the

movie to balance the seriousness of other cues, and let the audience to take breaths in between. However, they all appear in the first half of the movie, which make sense since the story becomes dark and tense in the second half.

Related emotions: Funny/ Pleasant/ Creative

**iii. Neutral:** Home Sweet Home, Kim at the Mall, Talk Show Shocker, Apology, Kim Spies, Ice Dance, Dog.

These cues are all related to Kim. The instrumentations are similar to group one, but lighter in texture, while violins and flute become more prominent. Choir is used to create the sense of romance.

Related emotions: Romantic/ Beauty/ Warmth/ Sad

### Source music

Cue	Title	Performer	Source
3	Delilah	Tom Jones	Radio
4	O Little Town of Bethlehem	O-Lan Jones	Organ
14	Blue Hawaii	Uncredited	Party Music
15	Aloha 'Oe	Uncredited	Party Music
17	It's Not Unusual	Tom Jones	Radio
24	Talk Show Theme	Uncredited	TV
25	With These Hands	Tom Jones	Radio
27	Background Music	Uncredited	Restaurant
33	I Saw Three Ships	Alan Arkin	Singing
34	O Little Town of Bethlehem	Uncredited	Unknown
39	We Three Kings	O-Lan Jones	Organ

Table 4.2: Source Music Information

The story is set in the 1950's and in Burbank of the United States. From the above table, we know that all songs with lyrics (except the Christmas song sung by Alan Arkin) come from Tom Jones. It makes sense to use different songs from the same singer to retain consistency.

However, Jones was a popular singer since the mid 60's. Regarding the songs being used in the movie, *Delilah* was released in 1968, *It's Not Unusual* in 1965, and *With These Hands* in 1965 also.<sup>6</sup> The unmatched timing is not a careless mistake. Burton didn't feel that the people he grew up around really cared for music, but everyone seemed to have a liking for Tom Jones. He refers to the singer as "the music of the neighborhood" and says this proves the people in his neighborhood had some taste.<sup>7</sup>

Also, the lyrics fit the script very much, especially *With These Hands*.

"With these hands, I will cling to you.

I'm yours forever and a day.

With these hands, I will bring to you.

A tender love as warm as May."

This song appears when Joyce turns on the radio and starts to seduce Edward in the back room of the proposed site of hair salon. According to the scene, Joyce has prepared this song before she meets Edward, which implies that she uses the lyrics to express her interest on him. The song title also fits the story very well, since scissorhands are the characteristics of Edward, also the only difference between him and the real human beings.

For the organ playing scenes, it is interesting to know that the music was actually arranged and performed by the actress O-Lan Jones herself, who plays the role of Esmeralda in the movie.<sup>8</sup> She chooses to play Christmas carols at her home,

which fits the Christmas background of the movie, as well as Esmeralda's religious fanatic character.

## 5. AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCORE

“I realized what fun it is to find a theme I like and just play with it. I'd have killed to do thematic variations on *Beetlejuice* and *Edward Scissorhands*. I could keep going on those for ever.”

Danny Elfman<sup>9</sup>


As Elfman said, there are a lot of thematic variations through this movie, and we are going to explore them. Then we will look into some specific cues, and study the relationship between music and the scenes.

### The Score's Thematic Integrity:

#### Main Titles

The movie starts with the Main Titles, which provides a whole bunch of thematic materials for the other cues to develop. The following transcription from bar 1 to 33 shows the first two of them.

Motif A



The image shows a musical score for a celesta. It is in 3/4 time and marked *mp*. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef. The music is composed of chords and melodic lines. The first measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The second measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The third measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The fourth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The fifth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The sixth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The seventh measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The eighth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The ninth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The tenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The eleventh measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twelfth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The thirteenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The fourteenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The fifteenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The sixteenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The seventeenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The eighteenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The nineteenth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twentieth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-first measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-second measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-third measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-fourth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-fifth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-sixth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-seventh measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-eighth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The twenty-ninth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The thirtieth measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The thirty-first measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The thirty-second measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3. The thirty-third measure has a chord of G2, B2, D3, F3, A2, C3.

Example 5.1: Main Titles, bb.1-33



5 Celesta *Rit.*

Vlns *p*

Harp *mp*

Celli *mp*

Bassi *mp*

11

Vlns

Choir *mp*

Vlns + Celli *pizz.*

Bassi *pizz.*

Example 5.1: Main Titles, bb.1-33 (cont'd)

16

Celesta

Vlns

Choir

*mp* Main Theme (Motif B)

21

Main Theme (cont'd)

Example 5.1: Main Titles, bb.1-33 (cont'd)

26

Main Theme (cont'd)

37

Main Theme (cont'd)

Example 5.1: Main Titles, bb.1-33 (cont'd)

Like many other film scores of Elfman, celesta plays a prominent role in the music, especially when it is the solo instrument from the opening of the first cue. It gives the magical and fairy-tale feeling, which determines the nature of the movie.

The main titles start in C minor. **Motif A** consists of four bars, where the first three bars are basically celesta playing broken chords in tonic, and the last one a downward stepwise motion leading to the dominant chord in the next bar. Then the celli come in with a lyrical melody.

The music was quiet until the choir comes in bar 11, where the title of the movie “Edward Scissorhands” appears on the screen. The main theme (**motif B**) finally comes in bar 13. The first phrase is repeated which makes the melody easier to be memorized.

The main theme is repeated by English horn after bar 33, then celesta plays broken chords similar to motif A. After that, English horn introduces a new motif, and I would call this **motif C**:



Example 5.2: Main Titles, bb. 57-64

The music then modulates to F minor, and the choir sings the main theme again in the new key. It ends with repeating the first three notes “mi – re – do” with rhythmic augmentation. The last phrase becomes “mi – re – do – ti,” (C – Bb – Ab - G), while the last note G is a common note with the first chord (C Major) of the next cue. It is a good trick for a seamless transition.

## The Romantic Theme:

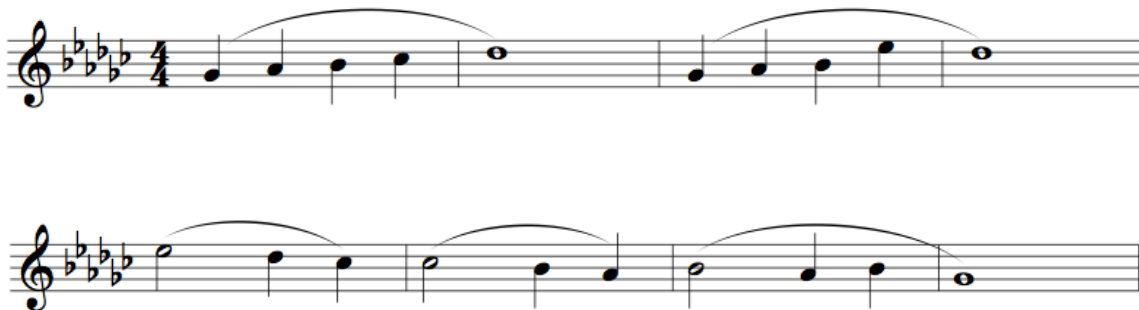
### Kim's Leitmotifs

The second cue “Storytime”, comes with the old woman (who actually is Kim) telling her granddaughter the story of Edward Scissorhands. It starts quietly, with woodwinds playing the melodies, accompanied by strings and celesta. This cue provides three motifs that will be reused frequently later. The first one is introduced by flute and violins in unison, we call it **motif D**:



Example 5.3: *Storytime*, theme 1

The other two are simple but catchy. Like the main theme in main titles, they are sung by the choir. They bring to emotional climax naturally, and appear in all the critical romantic scenes later. Due to their function, we conclude them to be Kim's leitmotifs. We call the first one **motif E** here:



Example 5.4: *Storytime*, Kim's leitmotif 1

Another one motif F:



Example 5.5: *Storytime*, Kim’s leitmotif 2

### Thematic Variations Through the Film

The first two cues, “Main Titles” and “Storytime”, function as the introduction of the movie. Script-wise, they are in present tense, and the story begins after them. Music-wise, they serve the theme-providing purpose. Here is a table summarizing how the other cues develop the above motifs.

Cue	Title	Motif recalled	Original key(s)	New key(s)
5	Castle on the Hill	A, C, D	Cm, Cm, C	Bm, Bm, D
7	Home Sweet Home	F	Eb	Bb
13	Cookie Factory	B, F	Cm, Eb	Cm and Dm, G
16	Etiquette Lesson	A, B	Cm, Cm	C#m, C#m
21	Kim at the Mall	E	Gb	C
22	Open the Door	F	Eb	Bm
29	The Tide Turns	B	Cm	Bbm
32	Kim Spies	F	Eb	C
35	Ice Dance	A, F, E	Cm, Eb, Gb	Bb, Bb and G, Bb
43	Dog	B	Cm	C#m
45	Death!	F, E	Eb, Gb	A and C, C and Eb
46	The Plot Unfolds	B	Cm	Cm
47	Mob	C, F	Cm, Eb	Dm, A
48	Farewell	F, E, C	Eb, Gb, Cm	C, A, Dm
49	Grand Finale	F, E, A	Eb, Gb, Cm	A and Gb, A, Gb
50	End Credits	A, B, C	Cm, Cm, Cm	Cm, Cm and Bbm, Cm

Table 5.1: Thematic variations

We can tell from the table that motifs B, E and F are reused most frequently. It makes sense since they are the main theme and Kim's leitmotifs respectively. Another thing worth to notice is when the motifs are recalled, they are usually in a different key as the original one. This is to avoid the feeling of absolute repetition, with the help of different orchestrations and tempos as well. We are going to look into some specific cues in the following.

## **Perfect Demonstration of Mood Changes:**

### ***Castle on the Hill***

It is the first original and non-diegetic music after "Storytime", also the longest cue in the whole movie (See table 4.1). With the duration of 6 minutes 16 seconds, which is almost the double of the second longest cue except End Credits, it describes how Peg finds Edward, and her psychological alterations during the process. I divide it into seven stages according to the physical locations.

#### **i. Discover the Castle**

The cue begins, alongside Peg's discovery of the castle in the wing mirror of her car, with a six-note broken chord played by the harp:



Example 5.6: *Castle on the Hill*, harp opening

It is a Bm7(b5) add 9 chord, which can be derived from the whole-tone scale. This unusual chord draws audience's attention, and predicts something extraordinary will happen. Long notes from violins and bass clarinet follow, which create suspense.

Choir, timpani and some other instruments come in when the camera angle becomes full shot. This grand atmosphere underscores Peg's decision of driving to the castle.

## **ii. Enter the hill area**

When Peg drives through the gate and enters the hill area, the arpeggiated celesta figure (motif A) appears with pizzicato basses, after a harp glissando. All these factors make the music nifty and childish, resembling Peg's exciting mood when she is getting closer and closer to the castle. When the camera pans out on the castle, music becomes magnificent again, with the use of brass and timpani.

## **iii. Visit the garden**

After getting out of her car, Peg arrives the garden of the castle. Here the music suddenly becomes dreamy, when Peg is surprised by the fantastic topiary artworks. Motif D is played by violins, and accompanied by music box like celesta, harp, choir and pizzicato strings. The music matches the fairytale image perfectly, also suggests that the character living in the castle is not evil.

## **iv. Enter the castle**

Peg opens the door and enters the castle. Strings hold long notes and harp plays arpeggios in diminished chords. Choir and bells repeat a short motif in descending semitone. The music is as mysterious as the dark scene here.



Later trombones and tuba plays short repetitive notes while Peg is approaching the stairs. Percussions are also used more frequently, indicates the nervousness of Peg.

#### **v. Arrive the upper floor**

The music becomes very quiet when Peg arrives the upper floor, only sustaining strings are left. She observes the environment carefully, and found something interesting on a side. Harp and solo flute are added when she is walking towards the corner.

As she sees the photos and new clips stuck on the wall, choir comes in to create a sense of warmth. Audience can imagine pureness from the music.

#### **vi. See Edward's silhouette**

Peg sees someone hiding in the dark, and she kindly introduces herself. After talking for a while, she realizes the weird silhouette of the character, and starts to be afraid of him. The music becomes louder gradually, with timpani rolls and repeating basses. Choir sings a phrase with short notes "mi-re, mi-re" here. Violins play slow glissando from high D to high C. All these elements help to build a stressful atmosphere.

#### **vii. See Edward's scissorhands**

With Edward's first dialogue in the movie, the music changes dramatically. Edward says "Don't go" with an innocent voice, where light falls on his face at the same time. Choir sings long notes "Ooh-ooh" with descending semitone, accompanied by high strings in tremolo. Woodwinds, low brass and celesta are also played in soft dynamics.

Here the function of choir is totally different to the previous section. It underscores a character as pure as angel. We can see that how flexible the choir can be used for emotional expressions.

The music in this part shows Peg's sympathy on Edward when she sees his scissorhands. This long cue finally fades out with Peg repeating the question "Those are your hands?"

### **"Dances" on the Hair:**

#### ***Edward the Barber***

The story goes that people just discovered Edward's talent as a barber. Every housewife wants him to cut her hair. This cue is funny not only because of the dance rhythms used, but also how music is related to the psychological activities of the characters.

Music starts with the cut of the housewives lining up for Edward's hairstyling service. Here is a transcription of the first six bars:

The image shows a musical score transcription for the first six bars of 'Edward the Barber'. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Violins and Violas (pizzicato), Cellos and Basses (pizzicato), and Clarinets. The second system includes staves for Oboes and Bassoons, Bassoons, Clarinets, and Flutes. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords, with various instruments contributing to the texture.

Example 5.7: *Edward the Barber*, bb.1-6

An interesting harmony is produced here, underscores Edward's creativity. The lower strings play the root (B) and the fifth (F#) of B major chord, while the higher strings are playing tritones B and E#. They combine to become a B(#11) chord. Later woodwinds play a five-note melody one by one, creating an echo effect.

After this rhythmic pattern, an eight-bar phrase is introduced by violins and alto saxophone in unison:



Example 5.8: *Edward the Barber*, violin melody

This beautiful melody comes with Joyce's adoration that can be told from her eyes. When she asks Edward, "Have you ever cut women's hair? Would you cut mine?", there is a subtle change in music. The rhythmic motion stops, and a long tremolo note Ab is held by violins. This note is important since it declares the tonal center of the next section.

Then the harp plays an Ab7 ascending arpeggio with a soft timpani roll on the tonic Ab. After that, the rhythmic pattern suddenly changes to tango, with its characteristic instrument castanets. This part indicates Joyce's enjoyment when she is preparing to receive Edward's service. Her facial expression implies that she is imagining a tango dance with Edward.

As Edward starts to cut Joyce's hair, music changes again. The tempo becomes faster. New instruments, guitar and accordion, are introduced alongside

with solo violin to add Gypsy music flavor. The fast sixteenth notes utterly underscore Edward's frenetic haircutting scene.

When Joyce's new hairstyle is finished, the music style becomes tango again, which brings the focus back to the customer rather than Edward.

The tango music goes on as Edward serving other housewives, until a moment that he carefully brushes the chair, indicating a special guest is coming. The music slows down. Violins play the same melody gracefully, and Edward welcomes Peg to sit down. Both the music and Edward's action show his love to Peg as he sees her as his mother.

This cue is probably the most colorful one among all, due to its frequent changes of music style, instrumentation, texture and tempo. It does not recall any of the motifs which have been mentioned above. The fresh elements bring audience a pleasant listening experience.

## 6. Conclusion

After studying the soundscape and the score of the film, we can conclude its successful music factors.

First of all, themes and variations are used appropriately through the movie. When something important is going to be happened, the thematic ideas are played which draw audience's attention unconsciously.

Instrumentally speaking, the choir is absolutely a noteworthy instrument in the score. It functions differently in different scenes, emphasizing the moments of mystery, sadness, romance or majesty. Celesta and harp also appear frequently to give a flavor of fairytale.

The contrast between the castle and the colorful houses is adequately manifested in music. Thick texture, haunting choir, legato strings, low brass and timpani are usually used in the "dark" cues, where the "bright cues" usually involve cheerful rhythms, exotic instruments like accordion, pizzicato strings, and solo violin cadenzas.

Theoretically, there are still a lot of other factors that make *Edward Scissorhands*' music successful, but people may appreciate it just because of its enchanting melodies. For me, the funny cues like "Housewives". "Ballet de Suburbia", "Paper Dolls" and "Edward the Barber" are very attractive and impressive, although some of them are pretty short. After all, Elfman and Burton's favor on the movie may also bases on intuition, which cannot be explained.

## Notes

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