Music, Myth, and Education: The Case of
The Lord of the Rings Film Trilogy

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In probing the interrelationship of myth, meaning, and education, I offer a case in point, notably, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy–*The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King,* Peter Jackson=s film adaptations of this trilogy, and Howard Shore's musical scores for Jackson=s films. Intersecting literature, film, and music allows me to explore various perspectives or ways of meaning making associated with this myth. And I then trace some of the implications of the analysis for musical and general education.

I am particularly interested in the musical connections with myth evident in societies around the world and well established in the anthropological, ethnomusicological, and philosophical literatures. For example, Steven Feld finds the myth of the muni bird to be foundational to a New Guinea society in shaping musical expression and communal beliefs and practices.[1] Likewise, as Lewis Rowell argues, Western music is rooted in and acquires its own *mythos* of person, power, and musical instruments; Dionysius, Apollo, Lachesis, Clotho, Atropos, Orpheus, Guido of Arezzo, St. Cecilia, and Thomas Mann=s *Doctor Faustus* are among those whose impact on music are legendary, formative, and figurative in music.[2] Associations of particular myths with operatic, orchestral, and choral repertoire in the Western classical tradition also abound, such as Wagner's operatic setting of the *Lay of the Nibelung* and Sibelius's evocation of the Finnish *V~lh~lla*. Music and myth are interconnected especially in the film music of our time, for example, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Titanic*, and the *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* series.

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[1]Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

[2]Lewis Rowell, *Thinking About Music: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), especially, chaps.5, 11.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, my present focus, Shore=s musical scores help to highlight the mythic character of Tolkien's narrative, bridge the externally perceived phenomenal world and the internal and subjective "inner world," interrelate the experience of time–especially past and present, and evoke a sense of wonder and awe that otherwise may be forgotten in pervasively materialistic societies. Music's role in kindling reverence goes to the heart of what these films share that make them mythic–transcendence, profundity, ambiguity, narrativity, and an aesthetic and didactic character that arouse awe, mystery, and a heightened sense of the human condition. Here, music is primarily representational,[3] serving functional as well as aesthetic/artistic roles in expressing such mythic themes as the contest between good and evil (in which evil is often more fragile and the odds sometimes insurmountable), and the inevitability of death, in which human beings are often at the whim of capricious gods, natural forces, and their own weakness. It adds emotional and intellectual feeling to the visual images, pointing particular attention to specific scenes and representing the tensions built or released as the narrative and visual images unfold.

Music's role in blurring past and present is particularly interesting since it is an art of time. *The Lord of the Rings* evokes an earlier time of crisis in Middle-earth when the survival of humanity was in jeopardy. The soundtrack assists the movie goer to make connections between times and travel imaginatively through time, thereby bringing alive past and imagined future in the present moment. Boundaries between past and present become fuzzier and one is helped in moving from one time to another. *Leitmotifs* are of particular interest in helping to make the ambiguity of the narrative more easily accessible and comprehensible, even at risk of

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[3]Such music in the Western classical tradition is sometimes disparaged as of lesser worth than what Peter Kivy terms "music alone"–instrumental music without text, title, or program of the sort found, for example, in the symphonic literature. See his *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

oversimplifying matters–a quality evocative of music=s use in the speech-song performances of the *Iliad* among other ancient stories.

Tolkien's fairytale is not couched for children as in his earlier *The Hobbit* but written unabashedly for adults.[4] *The Fellowship of the Ring* can be seen as an epic fairytale with "a kind of religious significance."[5] In her analysis of "life symbols," or artistic, ritualistic, and mythic systems that are read "non-discursively," having no assigned connotation and therefore felt and grasped imaginatively and intuitively, Susanne Langer suggests that fairytales are a genre below that of myth in the continuum between dream and myth. For her, "myth has...a more difficult and more serious purpose than fairytale" to present for our contemplation the "natural conflicts of human desire frustrated by non-human powers, hostile oppression, or contrary desires; it is a story of the birth, passion, and defeat by death which is man=s common fate," and its purpose is "moral orientation, not escape."[6] Tolkien, however, wishes his reader to see a similar serious mythic purpose within his fairytale, *The Lord of the Rings*, namely, in showing the contest between good and evil, Sauron"s sin in aspiring to be God-King,[7] and God=s "sole right to

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[4]One also thinks of other of his fairy tales written for children, for example, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* ([1949]; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976); *Mr. Bliss*, First American Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983); *Smith of Wootton Major and Leaf by Niggle* ([1967, 1964]; repr., London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1983)

[5]John J. Davenport, "Happy Endings and Religious Hope: *The Lord of the Rings* as an Epic Fairy Tale," in Gregory Bassham and Eric Bronson, eds., *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy: One Book to Rule them All* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 204.

[6]Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 176.

[7]Scott A. Davison, "Tolkien and the Nature of Evil," in Bassham and Bronson, eds., *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 107, and *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed., Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 243. In this regard, Sauron commits the self-same sin as Melkor his master; at the creation of the world, Melkor aspired to the power of the god

divine honour."[8] While Scott Davison sees the tale as a "tragedy that turns out well in the end,"[9]

Tolkien calls the happy ending he seeks a "eucatastrophe"–the opposite to tragedy–or as John

Davenport explains, "joyous salvation without apparent catastrophe," in which the innate human

desires for what Tolkien calls "Recovery, Escape and Consolation" are to be found.[10] The notion

of recovery is, as Eric Bronson notes, one in which the reader is enabled to look freshly at the

taken-for-granted, in which there is "a return and renewal of health, a healing of spiritual

blindness."[11] Langer would characterize these qualities as mythic. Beyond semantic richness,

however, she would also insist on the presence of significant form, on a carefully articulated

structure that creates a sense of unity while also contributing to a story that appears to be virtual,

or apart from ordinary lived experience and where listener and teller alike are caught up in the

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Eru, the "One," known as Ilúvatar in Arda, see Tolkien, *The Silmarillion,* ed., Christopher Tolkien ([1977]; repr., New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 1,10,11, 26 .

[8]*Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed., Carpenter, 243-244; Douglas K. Blount, "*Über*hobbits: Tolkien, Nietzsche, and the Will to Power," in Bassham and Bronson, eds., *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 88, and Davison, "Tolkien and the Nature of Evil," 104, quote Tolkien to this effect.

[9]Davison, "Tolkien and the Nature of Evil," 104.

[10]Davenport, "Happy Endings and Religious Hope," 210; Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories," in his *Tree and Leaf*, 1st American edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 68. In the section, "Recovery, Escape, Consolation" (55-70), Tolkien notes that "[t]he *eucatastrophic* tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function," and he points to the "'consolation'" afforded by fairy tales as one of their important roles (68).

[11]Eric Bronson, "Farewell to Lórien: The Bounded Joy of Existentialists and Elves," in Bassham and Bronson, eds., *Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 72-84. This idea resonates with Maxine Greene's notion of "wide-awakeness" in, for example, her *The Dialectic of Freedom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), passim, an awareness as if one had been ill or asleep and had now awakened to see what is really taking place. It also has the transformative dimension of return and renewal.

narrative and its telling.[12] The nature of its form and the sorts of ways in which it is apprehended imaginatively are analogous to the arts. So, Tolkien uses poetry within poetry, or figure upon figure as he artistically embellishes his story by including poems and songs that treat it as a work of art and bring it alive.[13] Narrative content and form are also important. The whole extended novel is constituted as a tightly-woven trilogy of books or parts, each comprised of two contrasting, intersecting, and neatly balanced sections–the self-same attention being given to the manner in which the story is told as to the care in attending to all of the narrative details.

The Fellowship of the Ring

     Since there is so much to say about the novel itself, and I have traveled some of this ground elsewhere,[14] as a musician, I am interested particularly in what happens when Tolkien's novel is transformed into a film. Langer comments that when arts are combined, there are no "hybrids" in which they are equally joined, but one art assimilates the other. As she puts it, "There are no happy marriages in art–only successful rape."[15] Jackson comments that Tolkien

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[12]Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 197, refers to this quality as "*poetic form*, a unity above the separate incidents, a beginning, climax, and solution of the entire mythical drama."

[13]Tolkien's drawings and watercolor illustrations are preserved, for example, in the facsimile publication of Tolkien, *Mr. Bliss.* Also, see Tolkien, *Pictures by J. R. R. Tolkien* (London; Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1979) comprising "all the pictures (paintings, drawings, designs)" "published in a series of six Calendars from 1973 to 1979, with a gap in 1975" (Foreword). In his *Letters*, for example, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 35, Tolkien is explicit to his publishers about drawings accompanying the texts.

[14]Estelle R. Jorgensen, "Myth, Song, and Music Education: The Case of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Swann's *The Road Goes Ever On*," unpublished essay available from the author.

[15]Langer, *Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 86, 85, 82.

believed that his novels could be enhanced by music, art, and drama, and with the making of the film it acquired "a new dimension." He remarks that some people said: "It could never be done," "the story is too big" and "the world is too vast" to be captured on screen. In Jackson's view, technological advances made possible the achievement of the necessary effects in the late 1990s, almost a half century after *The Lord of the Rings* first appeared in print.[16] The expressed dedication and devotion of the cast and their directors to the two-and-a-half year project of making the three movies at the one time is clear from their comments on the film.

How does the novel translate to the screen and how is the music implicit in Tolkien's poetry realized visually and aurally? Although Jackson intended to include the various cultures represented in the story, he notes that the "music" in Tolkien's text is imaginary,[17] and he is candid about his own musical limitations and his reliance on Shore, the film score's composer. Shore tells us that he wished to "re-insert" some of Tolkien's poetry into the film score by including Maori and boy choir renditions of Tolkien's dwarvish and elvish songs.[18] Still, Enya's songs (AMay it be@ and AAníron@) do not utilize Tolkien's texts, and the hobbit music so rich

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[16]*The Lord of the Rings: The Motion Picture Trilogy*, DVD N5542, Disk 2.

[17]Tolkien provides us with a glimpse into the songs he imagined in *J. R. R. Tolkien Reads and Sings from his The Lord of the Ring* [sound recording] (New York, NY: Caedmon CDL 51478, 1975) and *J. R. R. Tolkien Reads and Sings his The Hobbit and The Fellowship of the Ring* [sound recording] (New York, NY: Caedmon CDL 51477, 1975). In the former recording, his impromptu performances of the elvish "Ai! laurië lantar..." in Gregorian chant (Side 2, Band 8) and his dramatic rendition of the "Ride of the Rohirrim" (Side 2, Band 2)–George Sayer tells us they were a favorite of C. S. Lewis–are of particular note. Sayer believes that *The Lord of the Rings* grew out of "the beautiful and musical language that Tolkien invented in his undergraduate days" and having invented this language "Tolkien had to invent creatures who spoke it and then give them a history and a literature" (Cover notes on *J. R. R. Tolkien Reads and Sings from his The Lord of the Ring*).

[18]Ibid.

in Tolkien=s novel is largely lost in the film score. Since the characters of Tom Bombadil and

Goldberry do not appear in the film, their music is not included, and Galadriel's songs are also

absent. Interestingly, the score is pervasively orchestral and tonal since Shore hoped to create an

"operatic feel," a "feeling of antiquity," an "historical feel," and a feeling that maybe the music

might have been "discovered." What happens, however, is that while the music lends another

dimension to sight, it is swallowed up by sight in the manner Langer describes; the audience's

focus is primarily upon the screen.

Likewise, despite the obvious care and attention to detail and authenticity that the

filmmakers bestow on various aspects of its creation, the film version swallows the literary

version and imposes a literalness and linearity to the story that I do not find in Tolkien's

narrative. Rather than a sense of story upon story, of unfolding destiny, the film version is laid

out didactically without the same sense of mystery and wonder that I encounter in the novel.

Leitmotifs such as Frodo's theme, "May it be," function similarly to those in opera in identifying

and associating with the principal characters and conveying a feeling associated with them–in

this case, a simple, rustic, folk-like quality. Changes in Tolkien's story, for example, the

declarative rather than conversational nature of Elrund's Council, and Frodo and Sam's "escape"

in the last scenes (including Frodo's rescue of Sam from drowning) may work visually but

impose meaning on the story that is not evident in Tolkien's text. So, this film becomes one

version of what, I suppose, might be multiple imagined versions, but because we have seen it, the

film version may become definitive and limit the way in which we envisage it in mind's "eye

and ear" heretofore. I am unable, for example, to think of Gollum quite as the hobbit-gone-

wrong given a compelling computer-generated image that masks this important fact.[19] Jackson

also tells us that he leaned heavily on paintings by Alan Lee and illustrations by John Howe as

ways of envisaging the story; their imaginative constructions of Middle-earth along with those of

Richard Taylor in designing the sets and costumes, became authoritative in setting the stage for

the film. And in the process, Tolkien's narrative was limited, his poetry lost, and sound became

subservient to sight. Moreover, the metaphor of the journey, only one of several metaphors and

figures I find in my reading of Tolkien, becomes the single and definitive idea around which the

film is built. Notwithstanding the cinematic achievement represented by the film *qua* film,

Tolkien's tale is transformed and interpreted in the process becoming less ambiguous and

complex than my reading of the novel suggests.

The Two Towers

    The film *The Two Towers* departs somewhat more from the original novel than does the

The Fellowship of the Ring. One of the most noticeable differences is the interweaving of books

three and four or the two parts of the story that Tolkien narrates quite distinctly–the journey of

Frodo, Sam, and Gollum to Torech Ungol, Shelob=s lair, and that of Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli,

the hobbits Merry and Pippin, Gandalf, the fortunes of Minas Tirith and Helm's Deep, and the

destruction of Isengard by the Ents of Fanghorn. The film ends before Frodo, Sam, and Gollum

reach Torech Ungol, and focuses mainly on the events surrounding Helm's Deep. Other

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[19]The first scene in *The Return of the King* belatedly reveals Sméagol metamorphosing into Gollum, but by then, for me, the damage has already been done, and the computer-generated image has already stuck. For a comparison and contrast of Sam and Gollum see Jorge J. E. Gracia, "The Quests of Sam and Gollum for the Happy Life," in Bassham and Bronson, eds., *Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 61-71.

embellishments to the story include the experience of Frodo, the suffering pilgrim who is beset by and increasingly under the power of the ring, worn down by frightful visions, and almost powerless to resist the Eye of the Dark Lord, the banishment of Éomer by Théomer, the decision of the Ents to go to battle against the Uruk-hai at Isengard (omitting the role of the trees in the destruction of the Uruk-hai at Helm's Deep), Théoden's possession by Saruman that requires Gandalf's wizardry to expel, a fall by Sam in front of the Black Gates of Mordor where he is saved only by his elvish cloak, Aragorn's devotion to the elf Arwen and his salvation by her after his fall over a cliff in the midst of battle with the Uruk-hai and Wargs, and a different version of the story of Faramir and the men of Gondor who are reluctant to let Frodo and the ring escape their grasp. Éowyn, daughter of Théoden, so brave a warrior in Tolkien's tale that she is left in charge of Minas Tirith while her father and his soldiers go with Aragorn to the Isen fords and thence to Helm's Deep, is transformed into a weak and vulnerable woman. In the film version, all the women and children are ordered to make the pilgrimage to Helm's Deep since they require the protection of the men. At one moment before the battle, Aragorn is pictured encouraging a young boy armed with sword and mail while women and children huddle distressed in the caves behind the castle passively awaiting the battle's outcome, utterly dependent on their men and boys, and having, presumably, nothing positive or helpful to bring to the conflict.

Again, the attention to certain specific details makes the film credible and seemingly authentic, for example, the appearance of Treebeard and the Ents, the use of quotations from *The Two Towers* as with Gandalf's comment on entering Théoden=s hall, "The courtesy of your hall is somethat lessened," and other moments that ring true to Tolkien's tale. Still, it is one narrative

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that interprets and transforms the original and yet remains faithful to its spirit, to parts of and moments in it. Like the retelling of other great myths, it can only be partial since the whole is replete, multifaceted, and "semantically and syntactically dense," and it resists a comprehensive narration.[20]

Snatches of Frodo's and the elvish themes remind us of the first part of the tale, and the brass section of the orchestra features prominently in the battle scenes. Gollum's song underlines the film credits featuring Emiliana Torrin singing a song with music by Howard Shore and words by Fran Walsh instead of Tolkien. Otherwise, the score is pervasively instrumental with voices used instrumentally rather than sung text. As with *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the film score is classical and orchestral, utilizing the forces of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Voices, and London Oratory School Schola.

The Return of the King

The film, *The Return of the King* also departs from Tolkien's novel in important ways. Entire sections are deleted, for example, the Battle of Hobbiton and the destruction of Saruman. The narrative is also changed in detailing, for example, the circumstances of Denethor's death, the sequence of events in Shelob's cave, matters concerning the love triangle of Éowyn, Faramir, and Aragorn, the journey of Frodo and Sam through the Land of Mordor, and the sequence of farewells following the coronation of Aragorn. These changes shorten and simplify the narrative to focus on the battle scenes at Minas Tirith and the Gates of Mordor and the principal elements of the ring's destruction. Much of the original novel's richness is thereby lost and its cast

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[20]Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 252-255.

altered.

Instrumental and vocal music figure prominently in this final part of Tolkien's tale. Trumpets, horns, war cries, and songs are heard in battle,[21] and harps, viols, flutes, heroic ballads, and songs are also featured. This complicated intersection of lightness and darkness now takes on more meaning in Frodo's departure from the Grey Havens–since the color implies, at least, some combination of white and black, figurative of the eucatastrophe that Tolkien portrays. Again, music plays an ancillary role, for example, in a jig danced and sung by Merry and Pippin, as an expression of Frodo's predicament, and an evocation of the departure of the Elves to the Grey Havens. Among the featured songs are Aragorn's coronation chant and Annie Lennox's performance of "Into the West" during the film credits. The forces of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Voices, the London Oratory School Schola are again used, and soloists, Renee Fleming, James Galway, Ben del Maestro, Viggo Mortensen, and Billy Boyd bring to life Howard Shore's film score. Voices are often used instrumentally over orchestra to create an ethereal quality, for example, the elves' departure for the Grey Havens, and the farewell scene at the Grey Havens at the movie's end. There are, of course, the rhythmic motifs underlying the battle scenes as the Uruk-hai attack Minas Tirith and at the Battle at the Gates of Mordor and underscoring the brutal and heavy footed marching of the forces of Sauron. This sense of heaviness and almost machine-like rhythmic drive associated with the evil powers contrasts dramatically with the free-flowing and soaring chant-like melodic lines associated with the good powers, the elves, or the simple home spun folk-like *leitmotifs* associated with the hobbits, Frodo and Sam. The use of selfsame motifs as those in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two*

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[21]Tolkien, *The Return of The King,* Unwin Books ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), 58, 61, 99, 100, 143, 149.

Towers helps to unify the film trilogy since melodies are already familiar to the watcher/listener. As in earlier films, the featured song during the film credits, "Into the West," has a folk-like and rustic quality associated with the hobbits. Its encapsulation in now familiar musical material as part of a classic song form helps to create a musical unity even within the film credits as well as in this film and the trilogy as a whole.

Implications for music education

A study of *The Lord of the Rings*, especially from various view points, whether literature, film, or music, addresses crucial questions that all human beings face: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? It confronts such questions as how to live a happy life, how to relate to technology and instruments of power, the nature of evil and goodness, the role of Providence, one's stewardship of the environment, metaphysical questions relating to life and death, and the ways religious faith and moral commitments should function in daily life. The characters function as examples of different aesthetic, ethical, and religious perspectives and various aspects of life are expressed musically and poetically in ways that are moving as they are also intellectually stimulating. These pressing life questions are of intrinsic worth because they have to do tellingly with human nature. Since *The Lord of the Rings* is a hopeful albeit tragic tale and education needs to be a hopeful although realistic undertaking, studying the myth and its music can have especial value for teacher and student alike given its consonance with the objectives of general education.

Here, music allied with poetry, myth, and film is contextualized within an alien culture that enables one to see and reflect on one's own life and culture from a different perspective. Myth, film, poetry, and music come alive in ways that prompt the viewer/hearer to intuitively

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and imaginatively grasp important issues having to do with how one should live in the present. These issues are presented in ways that appeal intellectually, emotionally, and sensually. Since music is presented in the context of a life-world, its contextualization conveys a sense of its delineated as well as inherent musical meanings.[22] As such, one is not only studying music alone, but within a broad cultural milieu; one sees how it functions in mourning, consoling, entertaining, praising, and celebrating people and events. Recontextualizing musical study in this manner increases the prospect of its perceived relevance to students and their openness to its study, especially in the pervasively visual society in which we live today.[23] These film scores suggest ways in which musical study can usefully be refocused from an almost exclusive concentration on musical characteristics, that is, what the composer is up to sonically, to its purpose in relating sound to sight, enhancing and facilitating cosmopolitan and historical understandings that point towards humane ends, and captivating and moving the watcher's and listener's imaginative and spiritual feeling. In film, the arts are brought together in a unity that Langer desired and that she believed to have been largely lost in the modern world.

The Lord of the Rings also offers a case in which barriers of either/or thinking are broken down to combine the aesthetic and the ethical, the classical and the vernacular and see musics and the world more inclusively and polyvocally. This narrative affords a way of thinking about

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[22]On inherent and delineated musical meanings, see Lucy Green, *Music on Deaf Ears: Musical Meaning, Ideology and Education* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1988), chaps. 2, 3.

[23]Judy Lockhead, "Hearing New Music: Pedagogy from a Phenomenological Perspective," *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 3 (1) (Spring 1995): 34-42, notes that students find it easier to grasp unfamiliar music when presented with sight as well as sound–a point that reinforces the value of sight as well as sound and live musical performances as ways of music teaching and learning.

self and other, the spiritual and the phenomenal, human technology and the natural world, innovation and tradition. Since its world is complex and multifaceted and its actors must make sometimes difficult choices between the lesser of evils,[24] it prompts one to also focus on the long-term, a view more in accord with "green time"–the sometimes long time-scales of the natural world–rather than take an exclusively short-term view of things.[25] It prompts compassion along with justice and shows that evil doers can (sometimes unwittingly) contribute to the greater good. And the values it expresses are important especially in a world fraught with epidemics such as AIDS, wars, terror, poverty, and famine.

Myth celebrates spirituality, mystery, wonder and awe–human qualities that can be lost or silenced in a pervasively technological world.@[26] It is lived, something "you join in by constructing it, in making it up." True, a myth can persist "because too many people gain too many different things–money, identity, prestige, or a common critical standard–from it to give it up." And it may contribute to reinforcing the *status quo* more than mobilizing change.[27] This is particularly the case in our contemporary world where an interconnected global economy based

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[24]Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed., Henry Hardy ([1990]; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 17, 18, 67, 201, 202, 235, writes about the difficulties of sometimes difficult, incommensurable, and "mutually exclusive" choices, some of which are "governed by no overriding principle," in which each choice may lead to an inevitable sense of loss.

[25]For a discussion of this "green time" regarding Tolkien's tale, see Andrew Light, "Tolkien's Green Time: Environmental Themes in *The Lord of the Rings*," in Bassham and Bronson, eds., *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 150-163.

[26]Greil Marcus, "All This Useless Beauty," in Karen Kelly and Evelyn McDonnell, eds., *Stars Don't Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 20.

[27]Anthony DeCurtis, "Lost in the Supermarket: Myth and Commerce in the Music Business," in Kelly and McDonnell, eds., *Stars Don't Stand Still in the Sky*, 31.

on capitalistic, political, and technological values may commodify, market, and consume it, or otherwise render it invisible. Still, there is also the sense that its "system of value or judgment" is not only "incompatible with the indices of the market, but...deeply opposed to them." Whereas myth evokes memory, a "heightened awareness of death, loss, and suffering," "capitalism with its cultural industry demands the liquidation of memory and the colonization of those capacities for recollection that have utopian or oppositional potential."[28] Greil Marcus writes that when myth is missing from our lives, what is missing is a "sense of being part of a story that is bigger than yourself, being part of a story that can take you out of yourself, that can take you outside of the pettiness and repetition of your life, circumscribed as it might be by whatever city or town you live in."[29]

This sense of transcendence and imminence, of something larger without and yet deeply within self, arouses what Paul Woodruff calls reverence, a sense that one is on holy ground, of wonder, mystery, even awe in the face of the ultimately incomprehensible and inexplicable.[30] For human beings, in search of meaning in the face of evil and mortality and needing to voice our deepest hopes, dreams, and longings, the myths, arts, and religions are sources of joy, comfort, and hope enlivening and enriching an otherwise bland, dreary, and materialistic existence, and giving meaning and a sense of purpose to life. As such, they need to play an important part in general education. Inculcating a greater sense of reverence in the young, of the

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[28]Marcus, "All This Useless Beauty," p. 22; Paul Gilroy, "Analogues of Mourning, Mourning the Analog," in Kelly and McDonnell, eds., *Stars Don't Stand Still in the Sky*, 265, 270, 271.

[29]Marcus, "All this Useless Beauty," 20.

[30]Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

wonder and awe that the myth inspires, and a greater empathy for different others serves not only to give voice to what would be otherwise insufficiently expressed but to prompt imaginative thought in all areas of life, not just in the arts. Fostering musical, cinematic, and other artistic enterprises along with mythic and religious and spiritual undertakings can thereby assist in cultivating education towards humane ends.

The skeptic worries that such a curricular plan devalues specifically musical as opposed to broader artistic and other objectives, and that it does not yet address the humane ends to which education ought to aspire and the means by which they can be adjudicated in our present world. I have already pointed to evidence that musical interest may be rendered invisible and less central to human interest. A critic might suggest that Langer's "rape" metaphor would lead her to look askance at studying music mythically through, for example, *The Lord of the Rings*. My response is that Langer cannot have things both ways. If she would like to see a more unified approach to the arts, myths, religions, and dreams to which her theory tends, she must take the risk that music will remain vibrant if it is approached in a more unified way with other arts. Her own response might well be to suggest that there is a place for combining the arts as well as treating them separately.[31] Paradoxically, it may be that music is never stronger than when it is studied this way, since its functional and formal purposes can be more easily grasped by all those involved in the musical event, even though it runs the risk of being overpowered by cinematography, costume arts, and the power of the story in the process. The fact that music has survived in a multiplicity

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[31]For example, Langer, *Problems of Art*, chap. 6, is at pains to suggest that there is a tension between Art (covering the various arts) and the specific arts, each of which differs in important respects from the others. The logical implication of this view is the proposition that there need to be places in arts curricula for approaches in which the arts are combined in various ways and others in which they are handled separately for the different artistic beliefs and practices that they have become.

of vernacular and classical traditions, in many circumstances in which it was not the central focus, speaks of the power of the instruments of sound on which it depends even in the midst of other distractions and interests. Grasping music's mythic properties can also enable one to more fully understand the import of music. Still, this approach need not preclude a formal study of music for its own sake, irrespective of its other representations or functions. As a practicing musician herself, I doubt that Langer would advocate an either/or stance. Rather, I see her embracing the study of musical function and form, and including music that is representational, such as the programmatic music and film music, along with abstract music common in instrumental and symphonic repertoire where musical interest inheres mainly in the musical sounds themselves. Read this way, the suggestion of studying music mythically can be viewed as one way of extending the horizon of ways in which music can be taught and learned.

Valuing representational music challenges the view that the music of most worth is that which is the most abstract, unrelated to text, title, or program, and otherwise beyond or apart from ordinary lived existence. Focusing on relationships between music, myth, and the other arts, and integrating them into the rest of life suggests a very different view of the nature, purpose, and value of music, myth, and the other arts than seeing music as apart from ordinary lived existence. Representation, as one of the ways by which musical meaning is conveyed and grasped, has been a resilient musical function from antiquity, and a means whereby music is interconnected with lived life. For me, these tensions between instrumental music (sometimes called "absolute" music or "music alone") in which much of the interest lies in its formal construction, and representational music (for example, programmatic music, song, and instrumental music titled to suggest particular external references) or between vernacular and classical musics are not appropriately resolved as either/or solutions or by dignifying one and disparaging the other, but

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by valuing both as important albeit different sorts of musical expression.

I think, for example, of Johan de Meij's Symphony no. 1, *The Lord of the Rings*, premiered in 1989, a five-movement work with movements entitled Gandalf (The Wizard), Lothlorien (The Elvenwood), Gollum (Sméagol), Journey in the Dark: The Mines of Moria and The Bridge of Khazad-Dûm, and Hobbits, written for Symphonic Band with a Symphony Orchestra version. This symphony, while programmatic in its specific references, is also formally interesting as sheer instrumental sound. The program serves as a way to organize the sound, but the music is not limited to the program. Music's very ambiguity suggests an array of possible other scenarios that listeners, without intimate knowledge of the program (or even with it) might construct for themselves. While the music may start out being programmatic, and can be understood this way, it is also interesting in the self-same way that a piece of music without such a program might be. I am hard pressed to say whether it is of lesser or greater worth because of, or in spite of the program. This quarrel between the superiority of abstract or programmatic music can be easily resolved by taking a broader view that admits both as valuable, if also different, musical approaches and perspectives. And there are any number of composers who have written both sorts of music.

As for the problem of the specifically humane ends to which education ought to aspire and the means by which these might be adjudicated, it is true that myth shapes music in compelling and normative ways, and that the task of education may sometimes be to subvert the hegemony of traditional beliefs and practices and suggest alternative and more humane ways of being for the future–to actively criticize and even debunk myths from the past and seek to replace them with others. In musical study, the task of reconsidering educational ends necessitates revisiting musical *mythos* critically since myth is central to the educational enterprise. Although the nature

of the desired educational ends may still be an open question, teachers and their students can examine music's mythical qualities within the context of the values toward which humane society might aspire. Such a critical examination ought to be within the province of the educational enterprise since it would call into question both the values underlying myths and the musics that flow from them or with which they are associated–activities that are valuable in de-constructing and re-constructing the taken-for-granted things in our lives. In the case of Shore's musical score, set as it is in what some of today's composers might regard as an archaic tonal musical language, students may interrogate this musical language and its associated artistic values.

There is also the problem of this myth. A critic may charge that Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is problematic in its characterization of the forces of good and evil, the relationship of the characters to each other, the necessity of war and violence in solving the struggle between good and evil, the feudal nature of the Middle-earth societies, and the elusiveness of the choice and power that characters possess in acting in and on their environments. Tolkien's world view may seem to one reader to be naive, oppressive, sinister, and ultimately hopeless. Another might see it as a self-serving and complicated web of stories that, without consciously resisting their allure, might otherwise keep one preoccupied exclusively with Tolkien's world of fantastic narratives, linguistic constructions, and the seemingly unending array of stories, commentaries, and musics that flow into and from this story. A critic may also ask whether this narrative is one that should or can be lived by. Characters are drawn in black and white rather than in shades of grey, and their unreality in terms of normal human experience may suggest that goodness is ultimately unattainable, and it is easier to become evil than to be redeemed from evil. Still others may find it hard to subscribe to Tolkien's depiction of the hereafter that might seem less appealing than present phenomenal existence; the fact that that Tolkien's eucatastrophe separates friends forever

is a notion that is troubling if one seeks for consolation in the end.

These and other perspectives and criticisms need to be addressed since they have to do with which myths should be taught and how one is to address the important existential questions raised at the outset of this discussion, questions relating to how one came to be in the world, what one is doing here, and what one's future will be. My own response to these dilemmas is to point out that education ought not be a matter simply of indoctrination, that is, offering only one narrative that is taken to be true, but of opening the possibility that this narrative may be flawed or wanting in one way or another, and other narratives may be worthy of one's attention. Such a view would necessitate critically interrogating this myth just as one carefully examines the relationships between myth, film, and music. Through these means, one's horizons of understanding may be broadened just as one can become more aware of the pitfalls and problems in all the narratives that claim one's attention.

Israel Scheffler would suggest two additional criteria for deciding whether this particular myth ought to be studied in the school curriculum.[32] If, as he argues, the objective of education is self-sufficiency, a teacher needs to adjudicate curricular content on the bases of whether what is studied is logically defensible (that is, this myth serves as a work of art or narrative that suggests a reasonable alternative for how life ought to be lived) and generalizable (that is, this myth opens fertile ways in which important questions of lived existence can be examined). It is not necessary to agree with Tolkien's particular cosmology or the values he espouses to allow that his myth opens up myriad important questions for consideration. Since it has impacted the vernacular and classical cultures of our time, bridges the worlds of cinematography, visual art, music, and

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[32]Israel Scheffler, *Reason and Teaching* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), chap. 9.

mythology, and is among the enduring narratives of our century, this myth would seem to warrant a musician teacher's attention. I use it, here, simply as an example of the sorts of intersections that myth, film, and music can enable, and the benefits that may flow for music education as this myth is interrogated, notwithstanding its evident detractions or the limitations or flaws of this particular curricular approach to musical instruction.

In sum, I have briefly sketched some of the ways in which music intersects with myth in the Jackson's film trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, noting ways in which the film diverges from

Tolkien's novel on which it was based. Notwithstanding the potential pitfalls and limitations in taking a mythic approach to music education, I have sketched some compelling reasons to include it as one of the ways by which people come to know music and myth.