

# Horror Soundtracks and the Unseen Demonic

## *The Exorcist* (1973)

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One of the key roles music plays in accompanying film is to enhance the emotional reactions of the audience. Each film genre uses music in different ways depending on the mood that is presented by the dialogue and corresponding images. Horror music rarely follows the traditional symphonic leitmotif structure of classical film scores.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, the music that is used throughout horror films does not generally consist of memorable melodies or leitmotifs that are associated with specific characters. The role of this music is primarily to create psychological experiences for the viewers. As a replacement for the leitmotifs and melodies, a manipulation of the timbres and range associated with the instruments and sounds often creates unsettling sounds that cause heightened anticipation or terror in the audiences. By manipulating these musical qualities, the music is able to stimulate physiological responses in the audience. Donnelly discusses how “sounds, particularly music, stimulate the arousal of the autonomic nervous system (ANS), which is measurable via heart rate, electroencephalogram (EEG) readings of brain waves, and respiration.”<sup>2</sup> The ANS is frequently engaged through the incorporation of exaggerated pitches and tones. Examples would include the drones and “stingers” that are regularly used in horror films.<sup>3</sup> Very high or low

pitches directly affect the human body; the higher pitches resonate within the upper body of the audio-viewer, whereas the lower pitches result in the vibration of the stomach and lower abdomen. Donnelly suggests that these musical sounds are “tied to the intrinsic sounds of the human body (such as) the high buzz of the nervous system and the deep throb of the bloodstream and heart.”<sup>4</sup>

Classic horror films of the 1960-80’s era, such as *Psycho* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), *The Shining* (1980) and *Halloween* (1978) predominantly relied upon exaggerated pitches and stingers to ensure their audiences experienced unsettling perceptual, emotional and physiological responses during the films. *The Exorcist* and *The Shining* not only employed the use of extreme and exaggerated pitches and timbres, but also incorporated exaggerated techniques such as tremolo and *sul ponticello* (to bow or pluck near the bridge).<sup>5</sup> These techniques showcase the connection between horror film music and avant-garde music of the twentieth century. Donnelly suggests that such techniques also have roots in nineteenth century Romantic music.<sup>6</sup> In this respect Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* is a particularly important model. The final section entitled “Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath” has been considered a programmatic experience of an encounter with evil and the supernatural.<sup>7</sup> In

particular, evil is represented through Berlioz's repetition of the diminished seventh chord, which is constructed of two interlocking tritones. Since the Middle Ages the tritone has commonly been associated with notions of the Satanic in music.<sup>8</sup> Exaggerated techniques such as tremolo and pizzicato that are employed throughout the beginning of "Dream of a Witches' Sabbath," along with the diminished seventh chord, evoke a feeling of "strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter and distant cries."<sup>9</sup> They are most prevalent during the "round dance" that the Witches perform, accompanied by the *Dies irae* chant from the Requiem Mass. The strings create shrill sounds and employ *col legno* (strings struck with the wood of the bow), the flutes perform intense and excessive trills, while half of the orchestra performs syncopated off-beat major-minor seventh chords for four bars until the other half answers with simultaneous diminished seventh chords on the beat creating a disorienting bi-tonal pitch space. The *Dies irae* chant has also been consistently associated with evil, as it "has a low *tessitura* (comfortable pitch range) and a restricted range (all the notes of the first two lines are contained within the interval of a perfect fourth) [which] combine to suggest a mood of dark foreboding."<sup>10</sup> Translated, the *Dies irae* refers to the "Day of Wrath."<sup>11</sup> This section of the plainchant has been incorporated by composers into their works creating a reference to the setting of the Requiem Mass. It has also been used to create an unsettling atmosphere that deals with themes of the supernatural, witches, madness, darkness and general evil.<sup>12</sup> Examples of the use of the *Dies irae* in nineteenth and twentieth-century music include Franz Liszt's "Totentanz," George Crumb's "Black Angels" and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, especially in "Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age" (movement 5).

Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* also evokes countless religious images, suggesting that horror music and exaggerated techniques

have a strong religious connection. This religious theme is evident throughout horror films such as *The Exorcist*, further explaining the rationale for the use of avant-garde and dissonant twentieth-century modernist music.<sup>13</sup>

From the beginning, William Friedkin had a clear idea of how he wanted *The Exorcist* to sound and be presented to audiences. His preferred composer, Bernard Herrmann (who famously scored Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*), rejected his offer to compose a score for the film, leaving him to work with Lalo Schifrin.<sup>14</sup> Friedkin instructed Schifrin to compose a score consisting of dissonant strings, as Friedkin described his ideal score as:

[N]othing scary, no so-called frightening music ... only music in the montage sequences. The music should be like a cold hand on the back of your neck, a chill presence that would never assert itself except on the final musical statement over the credits.<sup>15</sup>

The notion of not allowing the music to instruct the audiences how to feel or perceive the scenes was very important for Friedkin. He was adamant about making the audience feel alone and to be unaware of what lay ahead. Schifrin's score was deemed "too scary" because it guided the audiences and focused primarily on dissonant strings accompanied by percussion. A child's voice was heard singing the traditional "Tantum Ergo Sacrementum" ("Hence, So Great a Sacrament") while another recording included the Requiem Mass excerpt "Liberate me Domine de Morte" ("Lord, Liberate me from Death.") When the soundtrack and images were combined, audiences, including Friedkin were terrified of the result, suggesting that the music greatly influenced the way audiences perceived the visual images on the screen.<sup>16</sup> Due to the overwhelmingly negative response, Friedkin chose to abandon Lalo Schifrin's original score in favour of a compilation of previously composed

music from prominent twentieth-century composers.

The 1973 title-track from the concept album “Tubular Bells,” written and performed by Mike Oldfield, has become synonymous with *The Exorcist*. Oldfield, an English progressive rock composer and guitarist released the instrumental “Tubular Bells” at age 19. The album consists of music that has been described as “quasi-minimalist piece(s) at the melodic end of progressive rock.”<sup>17</sup>

The first time this theme is heard in the film is at 15:37, in a sequence that follows Chris MacNeil on her walk home from the movie set. Like the other music heard throughout the film it is associated with a transitional scene. The music, which begins just after Chris tells her driver that she will be walking home, serves as a background element, underscoring other sounds such as the wind blowing the nuns’ habits, a motorcycle revving its engine and the sounds of the children playing. As Chris passes the church she hears the voice of Father Karras and stops to listen to what he is saying. “Tubular Bells” continues playing until an airplane dominates the soundscape, quieting both Father Karras and the music as the scene transitions to the inside of Chris’s apartment. The theme returns during the final credits for approximately four minutes.

Oldfield’s “Tubular Bells” was also featured in the theatrical trailers, allowing audiences to create associations between the music and the action in the trailer. The film incorporates a small section of the Oldfield original, choosing the section that has the least complicated instrumentation and rhythmic attributes. The piece has been described as deliberately attempting to amalgamate minimalist methods with baroque-like polyphonic melodies.<sup>18</sup> The small section of the piece highlighted in the film consists of twelve bars of melody repeated, alternating between triple and quadruple metre. The instruments heard in the

excerpt include a piano and synthesizer. The synthesizer provides an alternative sense of exaggeration to the extended techniques on violin used by Penderecki, Crumb and Webern heard elsewhere in the film. Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki (1933 - ) and horror film music have become synonymous with each other, even though Penderecki’s music was commonly used for horror scores before it was his intention to write film music. Krzysztof Penderecki is an influential twentieth-century Polish composer and his music can be divided into three different style periods. The first period focuses on timbral exploration; the second involves his exploration of density and texture through expanding older vocal material (such as Gregorian Chant), and the third period has been described as having “introduced melody and harmony as serious compositional elements.”<sup>19</sup> This final phase introduced “a series of pieces based upon “post-Wagnerian chromaticism” and traditional form (see for example Symphony #2).”<sup>20</sup> Penderecki’s influential use of “sonorism” (focusing on characteristics and qualities of sounds) in his pieces provided a new dimension to twentieth-century music that had not been previously explored to this extent. Sonorism could be considered the most important approach to musical composition for horror film music, especially *The Exorcist*.<sup>21</sup> The way in which it is favoured in Penderecki’s pieces could explain why it has commonly been associated with horror film scores, and the declaration that “Krzysztof Penderecki... [is] at last where he belongs.”<sup>22</sup> The sonoristic elements employed by Penderecki are easily integrated into the musical soundscape of *The Exorcist* because it is a “an exploration of the pure sound values of the sound material,”<sup>23</sup> which implies that this music lacks a memorable melody, something that Friedkin adamantly wanted to avoid. By intentionally incorporating music that consciously refrains from using traditional melodic structures

and leitmotifs in favour of sound masses this fulfills Friedkin's desire to include music that would not conventionally guide the audience's emotions. Sound masses, such as those incorporated in Penderecki's pieces avoid conventional harmony and rhythm, making them difficult to associate with traditionally composed film scores.

William Friedkin specifically chose to include *Polymorphia*, along with six other Penderecki pieces after they were used in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Friedkin was drawn to the way in which Penderecki's pieces enhanced the images without overpowering them. He found that the music "contributed to the film a certain timbre to alienate the ordinary and natural scenes... and charge them with negativity."<sup>24</sup>

The piece *Polymorphia* is an ideal illustration of Penderecki's incorporation of sonoristic techniques. The title *Polymorphia* refers to "the broadly deployed scale of sounds ... the exchange and simultaneous penetration of sound and noise, the contrast and interflow of soft and hard sounds."<sup>25</sup> This work is important not only because it focuses on the sounds and textures instruments can produce, but also because it marks the point at which Penderecki created his own notational system, abandoning the traditional notational system for graphic scores.<sup>26</sup> The graphic score that Penderecki created for *Polymorphia* is notated in red, green, blue and black ink and consists of some musical excerpts, numbering, and corrections done in pencil.<sup>27</sup> The pitch notations are distinctly drawn to resemble the brainwaves from an encephalogram traced in blue and black. The colours also indicate that a sound mass of unbroken sliding pitches will be created based on actual encephalograms from patients listening to his earlier *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*. The notion that this piece was based on brainwaves adds an interesting dimension to a

piece incorporated in a horror film that is predominantly concerned with the manipulation of reactions and physical responses from audiences.

*Polymorphia* consists of a simplistic range of instrumentation, composed for forty-eight strings that are comprised of twenty-four violins, eight violas, eight cellos and eight contrabassi.<sup>28</sup> All of the stringed instruments perform exaggerated extended techniques that involve vibrating different parts of the instrument such as the fingerboard, soundboard, bridges and tailpieces, string in front of the bridge, and the strings between the bridge and the tailpiece.<sup>29</sup> The tools that Penderecki uses to create the vibrations, (referred to as inciters) consist of bow-hair, hand surfaces (palm, fingers), bow stick (including the nut) and the strings in front of the bridge. Each of the inciters is associated with a particular vibration source causing the instruments to produce unsettling exaggerated noises.

The beginning section of *Polymorphia*, which is incorporated into *The Exorcist*, follows Chris and Regan through their daily activities in their home prior to Regan's possession.<sup>30</sup> By associating this section of the music with their home life, it creates the sensation that Evil is present at all times, even during the ordinary banal activities of a family's home life. This connection is found between the unsettling almost inaudible (due to its predominance in the lower string register) sounds that gesture to the audience the potential presence of demonic forces and their ordinary lives. Penderecki played with various techniques throughout this piece, creating a series of binaries that are expressed through the sounds of the instruments. Some of the binaries include (but are not limited to) high register versus low register, middle register versus extreme register, temporal continuity versus temporal discontinuity, loud dynamics versus soft dynamics, and spatial mobility versus

spatial immobility.<sup>31</sup> Each of these binaries is expressed in different sections of the piece with some overlapping each other. They each add to the unsettling discourse especially when associated with the visuals of *The Exorcist*. This section of the music begins on the note E, which is part of the lowest string register, and subsequently builds creating a cluster of tones performed by the contrabassi.<sup>32</sup> The texture and unsettling atmosphere associated with the extreme high and low registers of string instruments is amplified by the addition of a C in the cellos (the lowest note possible played by the cellos). Even though the notes are generally very hard to hear due to their predominately low registers the audience is still receiving physiological signals that something is happening underneath the dialogue and visuals.<sup>33</sup>

Friedkin chose to incorporate excerpts from six Penderecki pieces that dominate the soundtrack for *The Exorcist*. Even-though Penderecki is featured most frequently, the amount of time his music appears in the film ranges from a few seconds to a few minutes per excerpt. Friedkin chose to incorporate only fragments of some pieces, for fear that they would have been recognized, and therefore that they would break the mood he was evoking. The smallest fragments of Penderecki's pieces were chosen from his "Cello Concerto" and *Die Teufel von Loudun (The Devils of Loudun)*.

To incorporate even a fragment *The Devils of Loudun* (1968) is an interesting decision by Friedkin, as the atonal opera includes scenes concerning religion and sexual hysteria like those found in *The Exorcist*.<sup>34</sup> There are many similarities between the plots of *The Exorcist* and *The Devils of Loudun*. The opera recounts the historical tale of mass demonic possession that occurred from 1632-38 in the town of Loudun, France. Strong religious themes are present throughout the opera including exorcism and the involvement of Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and

Satan. Similar to *The Exorcist*, the libretto is based on a book, "The Devils of Loudun" (1952), by Aldous Huxley, released as a non-fiction novel about the historical event.<sup>35</sup> The book and libretto highlight many of the same issues that Regan faces such as demonic possession, questioning of religion, sexual repression and acts of hysteria.

*The Devils of Loudun* is written using atonal and expressionist techniques. The extended techniques that were present in *Polymorphia* are incorporated into this piece and those are the fragments that Friedkin chose to incorporate into the film. A brief vocal section of this opera is heard during Regan's exorcism. The vocals are heard sustaining dissonant notes underneath the voices of the various demons that possess Regan's body. The underlying dissonant vocals are extremely subtle adding to the bewildering moment of experiencing numerous demonic male and female voices coming from Regan's body. This scene, in particular, follows the famous "pea-soup scene" in which she spits a green liquid into the face of Father Karras.

Not only does this opera involve surprisingly similar thematic elements and plot to those of *The Exorcist*, but the incorporation of atonal structures and techniques has also been closely associated with the horror film soundscape.<sup>36</sup> According to Mark Brownrigg, "the use of atonality can be heard as the ultimate musical enunciation of the chaos depicted in many Horror films; musically, reason has been shown to have 'left the building'."<sup>37</sup>

American composer George Crumb creates a soundscape that exaggerates the capabilities and timbre of the instruments.<sup>38</sup> Crumb himself has described his music as "a system of proportions in the service of spiritual impulse."<sup>39</sup> Similar to those of Penderecki, Crumb's pieces evoke unsettled reactions from the listener through his incorporation of

extended techniques (as discussed below). Few of his works have featured electric instruments, but *Black Angels*, the string quartet that was chosen by Friedkin for inclusion in *The Exorcist*, is one of the exceptions. Crumb frequently incorporates symbolism or numerology into his pieces to provide an added dimension of complexity for the listeners.

The piece “Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects” is the first movement from George Crumb’s string quartet *Black Angels*. This quartet is associated with Evil and Satan through the musical language, the numerous numerological references to 13 as well as in reference to the name of the quartet.<sup>40</sup> A black angel is an angel who has been expelled from Heaven.

*Black Angels* is divided into four main movements, each with their own subsections. The section from which excerpts were chosen for *The Exorcist* relates to the first subsection in the first movement. The term “Threnody” divides into its original components, Threnos and Odie, that refer to a song of lament.<sup>41</sup> Kris Ho Ang-Cheng and Victor Rodriguez suggest that *Black Angels* frequently conjures emotions of sadness or unease due to its connection to the Vietnam War. Ho and Rodriguez claim that the piece was created as a criticism for the war to “probe the limits of the American imagination by crafting a musical experience where the listening self found little solace of the strict binaries of enemy and friend, but found instead transiting fluid boundaries connecting them.”<sup>42</sup>

The tritone, *diabolus in musica*, is consistently present throughout the opening Threnody to symbolize the presence of Evil in the piece.<sup>43</sup> Crumb incorporated many extended techniques and glissandos into each voice, while exploring baroque-like terraced dynamics.<sup>44</sup> The quartet evoked such terrifying reactions from its listeners that it could never be integrated into popular culture, until *The Exorcist*. Ho and

Rodriguez suggest that this piece was essential to the film because it played on the social fears of the audience. One of the social fears that they feel is most prevalent in the film is “the American fear, both in society and in the battlefield, of the impossibility of locating the enemy: is the enemy our own government? Is the enemy within our own body?”<sup>45</sup>

Friedkin’s incorporation of Crumb’s music in the film can be considered the only instance in the film in which the music leads the audiences’ reactions. A short excerpt of “Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects” is associated with the scene that ultimately convinces Father Karras that Regan is possessed and that an exorcism is necessary. The buzzing strings create a sense of unease through both their speed and the exaggerated techniques that create a high pitched shrill noise. The combination of these techniques makes the audience feel unsettled even the music is associated with disturbing images. The corresponding images depict Regan sleeping, tied to her bed after an episode of trying to harm her mother and other visitors. The housekeeper Sharon brings Father Karras into the room to show him that something unusual is happening to Regan, the music begins as the camera focuses on her bare abdomen. The intense music is heard as the words “Help Me” become visibly embossed on her skin. The music abruptly pauses as the camera shifts to a horrified Father Karras and resumes as the horrifying image of Regan’s stomach fills the visual field. The music ends as the camera pans back to Father Karras.

What is Friedkin’s motivation for using this particular piece in this scene? There are several possible explanations. Consider the pairing of the images and music as well as the use of foreshadowing from earlier scenes. The sonic elements of this excerpt, as previously discussed, are used to represent the sensation of noises of insects and their association with Evil with the

incorporation of the *diabolus in musica*. Father Merrin encounters similar sonic elements such as extended techniques, buzzing strings and dissonant chords in the earlier scenes involving the discovery of Pazuzu in Iraq. As Father Merrin uncovers the talisman of the demon the buzzing strings are faintly heard in the underscore, signifying, as Crumb suggests, the entrance of Evil forces into the plot.<sup>46</sup> The association between the buzzing animalistic string motifs and the presence of Evil are created near the beginning of the film and continued throughout, thus building until “Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects” is included in a scene that justifies the presence of Evil for Father Karras.

Mark Evans suggests an association between animal sounds and the demonic in *The Exorcist* while examining the sound effects used throughout the film.<sup>47</sup> He effectively concludes that the incorporation of sounds like dogs fighting (heard as Father Merrin gazes at a enormous statue of Pazuzu) and insects buzzing (a potential reference to the sounds created by the strings in this piece and the sonoristic techniques in *Polymorphia*) create an underlying allusion to Evil.

The connection between the buzzing technique of the strings within “Night of the Electric Insects” and the abdomen of the possessed Regan implies that the music symbolizes Evil and can be used to convince the skeptics in the audience of the possession. By associating the music with the visuals of the words “Help Me” emerging from her abdomen there is a sense that a struggle is occurring between Evil forces inside Regan and her normal persona. The animalistic or buzzing noises of the strings are related to the demonic forces but the rapidity of the movements and the sharp changes of pitch could imply some form of fight or chaos. The sounds of chaos are stopped as the camera pans away from the girl, suggesting that this activity is contained within her body.

The sound effects that are found throughout *The Exorcist* set up the sub-theme of science versus religion. Possession films popularize this binary theme, forcing the audience to choose between their religious beliefs and their trust in scientific practices. The sound effects add a layer of dimension that helps to create imagery beyond that of the music’s capabilities and enhance the overall mood of the particular scene. The science-versus-religion theme is particularly important for *The Exorcist* as it creates a binary between the two worlds. Following the questioning of God’s existence by *Time Magazine*, in which they ran a cover demanding “Is God Dead?” and the declaration from Pope Paul VI in 1970 strongly recommending Catholic Priests to resume their studies of Satan and evil, there was a resurgence of interest in the archaic practice of exorcisms.<sup>48</sup> John Kenneth Muir comments that following these events “God might be dead, but the Devil was alive and well and playing at your local theatre,” after Hollywood responded with a slew of demonic themed films such as *The Exorcist* and *The Omen* throughout the 1970’s.<sup>49</sup> Not only were popular religious beliefs brought into question but there was also the emergence of medical practices and disorders that were not yet fully understood. This combination of events left audiences understandably fearful of the domain of the unknown and unexplained which was further exacerbated in Hollywood films throughout the decade.<sup>50</sup>

The sound effects and imagery in *The Exorcist* revel in combining “social evils” and traditionally interpreted symbolism of evil. Mark Evans’ in-depth study of the sound effects and rhythmic analysis of sounds in specific scenes demonstrates how good and evil can be represented through sounds.<sup>51</sup> Each of the scenes that Evans analyzed can be correlated to either pole of the science-versus-religion theme. While the theme is subtly evident throughout the film,

two scenes in particular bring the fears associated with science or religion to the forefront.

The religious scene that scholars have predominantly examined is the opening sequence taking place in Iraq. John Kenneth Muir claims that opening the film in Iraq creates a foundation for a debate about the universe and the nature of human existence.<sup>52</sup> Before the scene even begins, the mood for the rest of the film is set. The title of the film is shown in red letters and accompanied by a chant, in a foreign language that most Western audiences would not understand.<sup>53</sup> If a listener were unfamiliar with the chant, or its specific religious source, they would assume that it is being sung. The prayer at the beginning read is by a muezzin (mu'adhdhin), who recites the opening prayer from the Qur'an before the congregation joins in the prayers that follow.<sup>54</sup> The words that accompany the visualization of the title *The Exorcist* are "Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar." This sentence is repeated twice before the next line in the chant is read. The line "Ashhadu an lā ilāha Allāh" is accompanied by the image of a white circle. As the circle fades to yellow the audience becomes aware that it is a representation of the sun within the scene. As the camera pans out, the frame is filled with the images of the desert and ruins as the line "Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasūl Allāhu" is heard. The camera focuses on a group of men with pickaxes whose sounds begin to sync rhythmically with the chant. The final line of the chant "Hayya' ala al-salat" is accompanied by the appearance of the words "Northern Iraq," which indicates the location of the archeological dig that the audience is about to encounter. The words of the chant that have been recited during the opening of the film is the "Islamic Call to Prayer" (adhān).<sup>55</sup> The translation of the "Call to Prayer" heard in the opening sequence is:

Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar God is most great, God is most great

Ashhadu an lā ilāha Allāh  
I testify that there is no deity but God

Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasūl Allāhu  
I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God  
Hayya' ala al-salat Hurry to prayer<sup>56</sup>

Colleen McDannell suggests that Friedkin sought to include the prayer at the beginning to aurally project the association of exoticism and Orientalism onto the location within the Middle East.<sup>57</sup> By including a prayer, in a foreign language, Western audiences would be unaware of the overtly religious subtext that the prayer provides to the scene and the movie overall. The prayer is important for establishing the presence of the science-versus-religion theme that builds throughout the film.

According to Mark Evans, the combination of voice and pickaxes, establishes the rhythmic standard for the remainder of the scene in Iraq.<sup>58</sup> The inclusion of hand drums emphasizes the sound of the natural order when they are consistently being struck on beats two and four. When the drum beats shift to eighth notes, Evans suggests that this symbolizes that evil is being released.<sup>59</sup>

Aural symbols of evil are found throughout the opening scene in Iraq through the combination of the wind, drone and chant as the artifact of demon Pazuzu is uncovered and the inclusion of animal sounds.<sup>60</sup> The animal sounds are not solely limited to this particular scene, they are found throughout the film in banal scenarios. The setting of frightening or evil noises against everyday scenarios, heightens the sense that evil is intruding into the ordinary. These noises are incorporated into the film to provide allusions for the audience, such as the fighting dogs encountered in Iraq. The dogs allude to the violence, evil and horror that will be unleashed later in the film, through Regan. The incorporation of fighting dogs, 'angry' bee sounds and noises of slaughtered pigs into scenes in

which they do not, according to Evans, belong, creates an unsettling experience for the audio-viewers, enhancing the horror already being experienced in the scenes. Evans suggests that the demonic attributes associated with the animal sounds are also found in the demonic voice projected through Regan.<sup>61</sup>

Through the medical examinations that Regan undergoes in an attempt to solve her problems scientifically, the audience is shown the horrors associated with technology. These scenes exemplify the hyperrealism that Friedkin favoured through associating a significant lack of music with the medical examinations. Friedkin allowed the instruments to be filmed in their natural environment without the addition of unnatural sound effects or musical interludes that would either exaggerate or subdue the emotional reactions of the audience. Kenneth Muir suggests that “the camera does not express the horror of Regan’s experience with modern medicine it only records it.”<sup>62</sup> By merely recording Regan receiving needles, computed axial tomography (CAT) scans, psychiatric examinations and other procedures, without the addition of music to guide the audience, these procedures seem more invasive.<sup>63</sup> The camera never specifically focuses on one element in the room over another, with the exception of one glimpse of Chris MacNeil’s reaction to her daughters’ pain. Michel Chion suggests that “the impression of silence in a film does not simply come from an absence of noise.”<sup>64</sup> For silence to be used as a tool to create realistic scenes, there must be sounds and voices so that the audience can become aware of an interruption of the silence. Chion suggests that silence may also be employed by subjecting the audience to a series of noises without accompanying music. This technique is very similar to that employed by Friedkin, as there is no music but only the noises from the machines, a few instructions from

doctors and the moans or whimpers coming from Regan.

The scenes involving the examination of Regan, prior to the realization that she is possessed (and not mentally or physically ill), heightens the audience’s uncertainty and fear that was associated with scientific investigations during the 1970’s. By wrongly diagnosing Regan with a relatively new disorder at the time (Attention Deficit Disorder) and prescribing Ritalin, it exaggerates an implicit question. If there really is no God, and technology is unable to create cures and provide answers, then what will happen in the future?<sup>65</sup>

The uncertainty and fear of the future and the unknown is a main theme that runs throughout the film. Director William Friedkin was very adamant about taking artistic control over his creation. This meant that each scene, musical attribute and sound effects were purposely chosen by Friedkin to enhance the audience’s experience without guiding them through. The year 2013 marks the 40 anniversary of the original release of *The Exorcist* in theatres. Even now after four decades, this film is still ranked as the scariest film that has ever been made and a film that still makes viewers question their own beliefs in God, just as Friedkin had hoped.

<sup>1</sup> K. J. Donnelly, “Demonic Possession: Horror Film Music,” in *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television*, London: British Film Institute, 2005: 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Donlevy, “The Symbolism of Evil in Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*,” MA diss., McMaster University, 2003, 3.

<sup>8</sup> F. J. Smith, “Some Aspects of the Tritone and the Semitritone in the *Speculum Musicae*: The Non-Emergence

of the *Diabolus in Musica*," *Journal of Musicological Research*, 3 (1979): 70.

<sup>9</sup> Donlevy, "The Symbolism of Evil in Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*," 2.

<sup>10</sup> Malcolm Boyd, "'Dies Irae': Some Recent Manifestations," *Music and Letters*, 49, (1968): 347.

<sup>11</sup> Robin Gregory, "Dies Irae," *Music and Letters*, 34 (1953): 135.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>13</sup> The early twentieth-century involved a turn in musical practices towards music that was more intellectual and harder to listen to. Composers (example: Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Webern) created music that was not readily accessible for all audiences frequently incorporating extended techniques, exaggerated dissonance and incorporation of atonality among many other avant-garde techniques.

<sup>14</sup> Florian Mundhenke, "The Exorcist (1973) als Beispiel der Relevanz von Filmmusik in genrespezifischer und filmhistorischer Hinsicht," *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung*, 2009, 3: 47.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>17</sup> Alan F. Moore, "Oldfield, Mike," *Grove Music Online* accessed November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/46253>.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Evans, "Rhythms of Evil: Exorcising Sound From *The Exorcist*," in *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema*, ed. Philip Hayward, London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2009: 115.

<sup>19</sup> Nelson Eugene Jr. Mandrell, "Compositional Aspects of Two Early Works for String Orchestra by Krzysztof Penderecki," MA diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1989: 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Danuta Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki*, Drukarnia: Music Academy in Katowice, 1997: 7.

<sup>22</sup> Mundhenke, "The Exorcist (1973) als Beispiel der Relevanz von Filmmusik in genre-spezifischer und filmhistorischer Hinsicht," 50.

<sup>23</sup> Józef M. Chomiński, and Krystyna Wilkowska-Chomińska. *Mate formy instrumentalne. Formy muzyczne I*. London: Polish Music Publishers, 1983: 126.

<sup>24</sup> Mundhenke, "The Exorcist (1973) als Beispiel der Relevanz von Filmmusik in genre-spezifischer und filmhistorischer Hinsicht," 52.

<sup>25</sup> Wolfram Schwinger, *Krzysztof Penderecki: His Life and Work: encounters, biography and musical commentary*, London, Schott & Co, Ltd., 1989, 131.

<sup>26</sup> Mandrell, "Compositional aspects of two early works for string orchestra by Krzysztof Penderecki," 14.

<sup>27</sup> Peggy Monastra, "Krzysztof Penderecki's *Polymorphia* and *Fluorescences*," *The Moldenhauer Archives*, accessed January 10, 2012 from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/moldenhauer/2428143.pdf>, 2000: 3.

<sup>28</sup> Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Penderecki*, 229.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>30</sup> Mundhenke, "The Exorcist (1973) als Beispiel der Relevanz von Filmmusik in genre-spezifischer und filmhistorischer Hinsicht," 50.

<sup>31</sup> Mirka, *The Sonoristic Structuralism of Krzysztof Pendercki*, 229.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>33</sup> Donnelly, "Demonic Possession: Horror Film Music," 105.

<sup>34</sup> Roger Parker, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 328.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Brownrigg, "Film Music and Film Genre," PhD diss. University of Stirling, 2003: 115.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Steinitz, "George Crumb," *The Musical Times*, 119 (1978): 844.

<sup>39</sup> Don Gillespie, *George Crumb: Profile of a Composer*, New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 1986: 77.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Olsen, "Musikk og mening: I semiotisk oh kognitiv metafor-teoretisk perspektiv med analytisk utgangspunkt i George Crumbs *Black Angels*," MA diss. University of Oslo: Institute of Musicology, 2011: 82.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>42</sup> Kris Ho Ang-Cheng, and Victor J. Rodriguez, "Music and the Politics of War: George Crumb's '*Black Angels*' and the Vietnam War," Presented at the International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research, June 2012: 203.

<sup>43</sup> Olsen, "Musikk og mening: I semiotisk oh kognitiv metafor-teoretisk perspektiv med analytisk utgangspunkt i George Crumbs *Black Angels*," 82.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>45</sup> Ang-Cheng and Rodriguez, "Music and the Politics of War: George Crumb's '*Black Angels*' and the Vietnam War," 203.

<sup>46</sup> Olsen, "Musikk og mening: I semiotisk oh kognitiv metafor-teoretisk perspektiv med analytisk utgangspunkt i George Crumbs *Black Angels*," 82.

<sup>47</sup> Evans, "Rhythms of Evil: Exorcising Sound From *The Exorcist*," 113.

<sup>48</sup> John Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1970's*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2002: 428.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 265.
- <sup>51</sup> Evans, "Rhythms of Evil: Exorcising Sound From *The Exorcist*," 113.
- <sup>52</sup> Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1970's*, 265.
- <sup>53</sup> Colleen McDannell, "Catholic Horror: *The Exorcist* (1973)," in *Catholics In the Movies*, ed. Colleen McDannell, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008: 197.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., 198.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., 197-198.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 197-199.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., 198.
- <sup>58</sup> Evans, "Rhythms of Evil: Exorcising Sound From the Exorcist," 112.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 113.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., 115.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., 120.
- <sup>62</sup> Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1970's*, 267.
- <sup>63</sup> Larrie Dudenhoeffer, "'Evil against Evil': The Parabolic Structure and Thematics of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*," *Horror Studies*, 2010, 1: 76.
- <sup>64</sup> Michel Chion, *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, translated by Claudia Gorbman, 39.
- <sup>65</sup> Kenneth Muir, *Horror Films of the 1970's*, 268.

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