

Horror Film Scores Over Time: An Analysis of *Night of the Living Dead* and *Before I Wake*

Horror movies have existed for over a century; as these films evolved with technology and visual effects, so did the music. Starting with silent films leaning strongly on the film score, music has been an integral part of the scary movie experience. When used correctly, music hints towards events to come, quickens one's heartbeat, and engages one in the film. With the horror film genre existing for several decades now, techniques that were originally effective have now become expected. Composers have overused glissandos¹, steady timpani hits, and immediate dynamic contrasts. Other standard horror movie musical elements include motives² that remind the viewer of childhood like nursery rhymes or religious music, ominous oboe solos, shrill string sections, and calm high-pitched piano. These can be viewed as typical, cheesy elements of scary movies. Now that these techniques are expected, the audience does not find it as scary; instead, it might be viewed as humorous. To counteract this, composers have changed how they approach writing music scores. This has caused a noticeable change in horror film scores over time. As seen in the films *Night of the Living Dead* and *Before I Wake*, music techniques used in horror films have changed from loud, fast-paced scores to quiet and low-instrumentation because it is more impactful on the audience when creating a scary effect.

In more modern times, researchers can use psychology to pin-point exactly what makes an effective music soundtrack. According to the journal article "Accessing the Mind's Eye and Ear: What Might Lab Experiments Tell Us About Film Music?" by K.J. Donnelly, composers have looked at past experiments and methods used to test human reactions to different auditory stimuli. From there, the film score writers have extrapolated how to create an effective score. If

¹ Glissando- sliding from a low pitch to a higher pitch and playing all of the notes in between the two

² Motive- short, repeated musical idea

researchers start conducting experiments tailored specifically for writing film scores, instead of gaining that knowledge from broader psychology experiments, the music could be even more impactful in creating the desired eerie effect in horror movies (Donnelly). These experiments also show that there are concrete ways to measure the effectiveness of certain musical techniques, chords, and stylistic choices. According an article by Alice Proverbio in *Frontiers in Psychology*, music causes somatic effects for the listener in a clear way. In a study conducted by Proverbio and others, participants listened to a wide variety of classical music and analyzed how each piece affected the listener's blood pressure and heart rate. The researchers concluded that overall a listener's blood pressure rose and heart rate lowered when listening to atonal³ music compared to tonal⁴ music. These two physical responses to the atonal music signal fear and anxiety in the body (Proverbio). While these are normally undesirable traits when appreciating a classical musician's work, this reaction is the expected outcome from viewing a horror movie. By this effect in the body being caused by simply music and no visual stimuli, it shows that music can add an extra level of fear to already visually-unsettling horror film. Therefore, it is no surprise that atonal music is commonly used in modern horror films, such as *Before I Wake*. By continuing these psychological experiments, we can further the research in creating guaranteed-effective horror film scores.

Outside of the music score, modern movies have significantly developed visually. Public interest in films has grown, creating a positive feedback loop of a demand for higher-quality films and a rise in attendees that gives the film companies higher budgets to do so. With extra financial resources and cultural support, the film industry has exponentially increased the quality of their movies. Technology advancements such as computer-generated imagery, or CGI,

³ Atonal- music without a center key

⁴ Tonal- music with a center key or tonic pitch that follows typical Western music

speaking actors, better sound equipment and better cameras have allowed modern movies to become more captivating than their predecessors. With high-tech cameras, actors can be more expressive, and the camera angles can better place the audience into the movie. The addition of CGI took movies to a whole other level in creating effects like explosions and realistic-looking stunts, as well as creating horrifying monsters that could not be translated into a man wearing a costume.

With this shift in movie visuals, the relationship between the music and the screen has changed. In older movies, music played a large role in making the film come to life. The acting was overdramatic so that the cameras could clearly pick up the emotions, the camera angles rarely changed, and every effect needed to be made in the “real world” since there was no CGI to utilize. Music helped gloss over the unrealistic special effects and brought the viewer into the film, so composers made the music loud and noticeable. For example, in the 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*, the film score uses many instruments that make up a typical orchestra. The movie relies heavily on the brass section, which makes the score very loud and bright. Additionally, the score is very active. It is complex with the string section carrying fast-moving melodic lines, and lower instruments occasionally carrying countermelodies. Overall, the different lines create a thick texture. By using speed, several timbres⁵ and a loud volume in contrast to the actors’ speaking, the audience finds the movie soundtrack very noticeable, and borderline distracting. With low-budget visuals, an even balance between the music and visuals when demanding the audience’s attention makes sense.

Nowadays, film scores have a much more understated role. Music in horror movies impacts the observer without them noticing it. In newer, highly visually-stimulating movies, the

⁵ Timbre- unique sound quality that allows differentiation between two different instruments, such as a flute and clarinet, even if they are playing the same pitch

music needs to be more subtle. If the acting, camera work and special effects strongly demand the viewer's attention, a score that competes for their mental space would be overwhelming to viewer's senses. Rather than creating a "best of everything" combination, this cacophony would make the horror film less effective. Therefore, subtle music written to support the visuals was the best way to adapt to the visual technology change. For example, the 2016 film *Before I Wake* uses music in an under-the-radar way. Instead of building complex melodies out of fast notes and wide leaps, it focuses on slow chords. Rather than a full orchestra, it focuses on one or two instruments at a time. Electronics play a large role as they create tones for the unsettling chord progressions. Instead of creating a soundtrack that would be interesting to listen to on its own, the music used in *Before I Wake* is sparse. It focuses on atonality and simple chords, instead of musical complexity. With better videography and special effects in modern times, a less noticeable score also allows the focus to remain mostly on the visually complex elements. The audience might not realize that music is playing during a suspenseful movie scene in a modern film, yet the music has done its job by raising their heartbeat and putting them on edge surreptitiously as the visuals create the very obvious fear. For example, the famous two note motive from the 1975 film *Jaws* had a large impact on the film industry by using subtleness in its music score. The slowly increasing in speed and volume "dahhhhh-dum" was a turning point in film score composition. The technique of creating an iconic motive and using it subtly became a successful element in creating a horror film's suspense (Biancorosso). In *Jaws*, the audience could barely hear the two-note motive at first, and by the time it was loud and obvious, the viewers were already feeling the somatic effects.

In addition to elements like atonality that naturally unsettles an audience, music can unnerve an audience with psychological association. Annabel Cohen figured this in her creation

of the Congruence-Associationist Model. The Congruence-Associationist Model argues that auditory or visual signs that appear similar to a viewer will impact them differently depending what they individually associate the triggering element with. In the case of horror movies, specific music motives can be mentally linked to specific people or events. When used effectively in horror films, it can be extremely impactful. In *Jaws*, a strong musical association between the two-note motive and a bloody death becomes connected for the viewer quickly. Therefore, when the two-note motive is heard throughout the rest of the film, even without seeing the shark, the viewer becomes anxious (Cohen).

Beyond psychological music impact and association, music can play role in the movie's plot. According to the article "Things That Go Bump in the Mind: Horror Films" by Guido Heldt, nondiegetic music can participate in the narrative structure, yet it is often viewed as only helping create a scary mood for the audience (Heldt). Nondiegetic music is music that is played by movie characters, such the Cantina Band in the Star Wars franchise. While C-3PO and Luke Skywalker are speaking in a bar, the Cantina Band is playing at the bar's front stage. Typically, music is diegetic, meaning that the movie characters can't hear the music playing. The music is added only for the human viewers at the movie theater to enhance their experience. By using nondiegetic music, music can become a plot element. In the same way that music puts the horror movie viewer on edge, music or consistent sounds such as a whirring, low fan can put the movie characters on edge.

Finally, the impact of music can go beyond the movie itself. Instead of being selected because it adds to a plot or helps create the unnerving atmosphere, music can be chosen for economic purposes. In the article "What's the Deal with Soundtrack Albums? Metal Music and the Customized Aesthetics of Contemporary Horror," Joseph Tompkins discusses the importance

of music in horror films in appealing to a niche group. Instead of focusing on how music makes a movie scary, Tompkins argues that music is used as a marketing and psychosocial tactic to keep an audience for future films. For example, the metal music in the 2003 movie *Freddy versus Jason* helps appeal to the pop culture of the time. Its relevance in musical selection adds an extra level of appreciation for the niche viewers, and they are more likely to watch future films as long as the production company follows the same formula (Tompkins). With this in mind, music becomes a tool for creating a scary atmosphere, continuing plot and maintaining a future audience.

Without music, horror movies would have a diminished impact on the audience and therefore be less scary. Throughout the years of horror films, the music techniques used to impact the audience have changed from obvious to subtle because it is more effective. As seen in the films *Night of the Living Dead* and *Before I Wake*, music techniques used in horror films have changed from loud, fast-paced scores to quiet and low-instrumentation because it is more impactful on the audience when creating a scary effect. These two films both fall under the horror category. The 1968 *Night of the Living Dead* horror film is known as the first zombie movie. It is filmed in black-and-white and was a low-budget for its time. In contrast, *Before I Wake* is a 2016 horror/suspense film. It has stunning visuals with CGI and high-quality recording equipment.

Night of the Living Dead observes a group of scared humans as they try to fend off a zombie attack at a farm house. The movie opens in rural Pennsylvania with a young female adult Barbra and her brother Johnny driving to visit the grave of their father. It is a typical, fair-weather evening as they stand at the grave. While paying their respects, a man starts walking in a stiff manner towards the two. Johnny jokes that the man walking towards them is a monster

coming to get her. Now up close, we see that he is a zombie, and he attacks Barbra. Johnny pulls the zombie off of her, leading the two to tussle, and Barbra flees. We assume Johnny to be dead as the zombie continues to chase after her. Barbra finds a farmhouse and runs inside for shelter. She sees a woman's corpse upstairs and runs out of the house horrified, only to discover that there are more zombies outside of the house. A man named Ben pulls the hysterical Barbra back into the house for safety. Ben begins making the house safer by barricading entrances, finding a radio and finding a rifle. During this time, noises from below the floor reveal that there are more people in the house in a hidden cellar. Helen, Harry, their zombie-bitten bedridden daughter Karen, and a teenage couple Tom and Judy are introduced to Ben and Barbra.

The movie continues as a discussion among the characters about the best plan to stay safe. Ben and Harry are on contrasting sides; Ben wants to stay on the first floor, while Harry wants to stay locked in the cellar. Their arguments are intermittently interrupted by short zombie attacks. These are posed as loud moans and limbs reaching through gaps in the doors and windows. A radio broadcast tells the group that these monsters are reincarnated corpses who are eating human flesh, and that any listeners should travel to their nearest government rescue shelter. After debate, the group attempts to refuel the truck at the farmhouse so that they can all drive to the rescue center. The plan goes poorly, and Tom and Judy die in a gasoline explosion. Once back inside, Ben and Harry get into a physical fight, and the monsters begin breaking into the house. Ben shoots Harry with the rifle, who then stumbles into the cellar. Helen flees into the cellar and sees Karen, now a zombie, eating Harry's body. Karen stabs Helen with a gardening spade, then eats her as well. Upstairs, Barbra sees a reanimated Johnny in the zombie mass just outside the window, then she is pulled into the swarm. Ben, now the last living human, barricades himself in the cellar and falls asleep. In the morning, he hears gunfire from the

government patrols, and looks out the window. The patrols believe he is a zombie, and shoot him. The movie ends with the government patrols throwing Ben's body into a mass pile of burning bodies.

Before I Wake is about a young boy whose dreams become real to those around him as he sleeps. The movie opens with a scared man holding a gun entering a small boy's room. We later learn that he is the boy's foster parent. The man shoots an off-screen monster, waking the boy. The man drops the gun and cries. The story moves to Jessie and Mark, a couple who lost their young boy Sean to an accidental bathtub drowning. The couple adopts eight-year-old Cody, the same boy from the opening scene. On Cody's first night with the two, beautiful blue butterflies appear in the living room. When Cody wakes up to get water, the butterflies disappear. The next night after Cody sees a photo of Sean in the living room, Sean is brought back and interacts with the couple. After realizing that Cody's dreams come to life, Jessie intentionally shows videos and pictures of Sean to Cody in order to satiate her desire to see him again. Mark gets upset with Jessie for taking advantage of Cody and takes down the physical evidence of Sean's memory. At school, Cody falls asleep and a monster called "the Canker Man" appears in front of Cody's bully. Cody's friend wakes him up with her screaming.

Jessie gets sleeping medication for Cody and unbeknownst to Mark, mixes it in Cody's drink. Sean is brought back after Cody goes to sleep, but it morphs into the Canker Man. Due to the sleeping medication, the couple can't wake up Cody. The Canker Man eats Mark, and Jessie goes unconscious. She wakes up to Cody calling 911. Social services evaluate the scene and take Cody away. After speaking with Cody's past foster parent, Jessie goes to the orphanage to get Cody back. As Cody has been given tranquilizers by the orphanage, Jessie sees many horrible monsters from Cody's mind. When she finds Cody, the Canker Man appears. Jessie defeats him

by hugging him with a blue butterfly pillow. The monster turns into Cody, and the nightmare becomes a beautiful dream, and reincarnations of all the people taken by the Canker Man are shown. Jessie takes Cody back home with her. The next day, we learn that Cody's mother died of pancreatic cancer when Cody was three. Due to the trauma of watching her rapid decline with chemotherapy and mishearing the word "cancer", Cody's mind created the Canker Man, whose appearance is similar to Cody's mother in her last days. It ends with Jessie embracing Cody, with an encouraging message that Cody will be able to harness this gift in himself that he grew to fear.

In comparing the opening scene music in the two films *Night of the Living Dead* and *Before I Wake*, they both open with the audience's attention being primarily demanded by music, but they differ in volume and complexity. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the movie opens with a full orchestra with a homorhythmic⁶ texture. The brass, strings, woodwinds, and percussion play disjunct⁷, accented quarter notes off the beat. Then, the upper strings hold a sustained pitch. Some percussion instruments hold the pitch as well. Flutes articulate the pitch and begin bending it, so the music ventures into atonality. The timpani plays rhythmic hits, and the strings begin to chromatically⁸ raise their pitch. Collectively, this gives the opening a dramatic feeling, then transitions into making the viewer cringe due to the tonal dissonance. During this scene, the camera is on a dirt road, but nothing is changing on the screen. This allows loud, dramatic music to be effective, since it is not competing with intense visuals. As a car approaches on the road, an oboe plays a disjunct solo with nonharmonic⁹ tones. Underlying it, strings trill¹⁰ between two

⁶ Homorhythmic- all parts playing the same rhythm, despite having different pitches

⁷ Disjunct- disconnected notes that have wide leaps between pitches

⁸ Chromatic- increasing or decreasing in half-steps, the smallest increment of tonal music

⁹ Nonharmonic tones- notes that don't fit into the music piece's tonal center, or into the current tonal chord

notes. The rhythmic timpani hits grow and decrease in volume. This scoring continues for most of the opening credits. Visually, the car is driving on several dirt roads and finally arrives at a cemetery. Once the credits end, the actors' dialogue begins, and the music cuts out. The music for the scene is effective. It features enough activity to have the viewer focus on it, but not too much to where the music is overwhelming or analysis is the first thought. It successfully puts the reader on edge.

In *Before I Wake*, the music opens with a plagal cadence. In music theory, this type of cadence is defined as moving from the chord built of the fourth degree of the tonic scale to the tonic chord. This IV chord moving to the I chord is also referred to as the "amen" chord, as it is commonly heard in church music. This choice follows the frequent horror movie technique of using church-like sounds as previously mentioned. In this plagal cadence, the instrumentation is made up of low strings, low men's voices and percussion. Because it is very quiet and low in pitch, it is hard to determine exactly which instruments are being used. After that, the visuals of the first scene begin. The music follows a conjunct¹¹ contour, so it stays non-distracting. It features swells on the upper strings in their lower registers. The notes begin soft, increase in volume, then decrease back to their original volumes. It gives a somber, creepy feel. In the background of the low-pitched strings and men's voices, it is hard to pick out the exact percussion used and determine which aspects are electronics versus physical instruments. They use chimes and a sound similar to a wind howl. Then, the music drops out. The only sounds are the scared man's footsteps and his breathing. When he drops the gun after shooting at what we later assume to be the Canker Man, the "thud" signals the music to come back in. The upper strings carry the melody of slow, sustained chords again, although instead of staying within a

¹⁰ Trill- rapidly moving between two notes, usually a half step or whole step apart

¹¹ Conjunct- connected melodic lines that lack large leaps between pitches

narrow range, each chord moves to a high pitch up, and increases in volume. This is effective because it builds suspense with the dynamic change and by broadening the range of pitches. It leaves the viewer intrigued.

When the monster is first revealed to the audience in an attacking setting in the two films, they vary in their decision of how to use the music to support the action on-screen. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the music does not come in right away when the monster is revealed. As Johnny is joking about the far away man coming to get Barbra, and the camera switches between the man walking stiffly towards them and the siblings' conversation, the score is silent. When the man is only a few feet away from Barbra, high-pitched strings start playing. The low brass outline chords quietly with separated notes. The man grabs her, and we see a close up of the man's face for the first time. The full orchestration plays a loud, disjunct chord and sustains it for the full fight between Barbra and the man, and the start of the following fight between the man and Johnny. During the fight with Johnny, the chord fades in volume. At this point, a thunder sound effect becomes nondiegetic music. It fits in with the score's tempo, and low timpani rolls line up with the thunder's booms. The low brass begin a disjunct motive, and the trumpets chime in for off beats. Then, the strings come back in and play a drawn-out melody line. During this upper strings line, the trumpets and low brass play steady downbeats. The combination of a less musically-complex melody with steady downbeats in the lower part creates intensity. The downbeats keep the viewer's heart rate up. The music morphs into the upper strings holding a trill while the low brass play a moving melodic line. On-screen, Barbra falls down the hill in her flight from the zombie. These same musical structures are used for the duration of the chase. When Barbra enters the farmhouse and closes the door, the music cuts out abruptly. This opening monster scene is a total of four minutes. The primary techniques used are loud, accented tones

either on or off the beat in the brass and percussion, a high-pitched disjunct melodic line or a high-pitched trill in the upper strings, and lots of pitch bending. Initially, this is effective. After so long though, the viewer becomes bored of the same techniques. The viewer's interest wanes from its lack of diversity in structure and complexity. It stays at full intensity for too long; there is not enough contrast to keep the intense music impactful for the full four minutes.

In *Before I Wake*, the monster first appears when Cody falls asleep at school, and the Canker Man attacks Cody's bully. Leading up to the attack, there is no background music. This is an effective technique because it outlines the bully's footsteps as he enters the room. The rhythmic pace of his walking fills the typical void of timpani hits or string instruments alternating between two notes to imitate and increase the viewer's heartbeat. The music comes back in with a timpani hit as soon as the camera shows the monster. From there, a low tone swells as the Canker Man attacks the boy. When Cody's friend enters the room, her scream initiates a timpani beat and the music cuts out. During this attack scene, the dominant noises are the raspy moans from the Canker Man, bugs sounds, crunching sounds, and the bully's sounds of struggle. Using sounds that make audience uncomfortable, like bugs and crunching, adds to the unnerving impact. This is a good example of the music surreptitiously influencing the viewer's emotions. After watching it once, the viewer notices the beginning timpani beat and the ending timpani beat of the attack, but no other music is apparent. I had to listen to the scene several times to be able to pick out the swelling note underneath. It effectively raised my heartbeat, and the lack of music distraction made the visuals much more intense.

The final battle music also differs between the two films; *Night of the Living Dead* makes choppy jumps between quiet and full intensity, while *Before I Wake* uses music sparsely, then builds to equally demanding the audience's attention with its visuals. In *Night of the Living*

Dead, the brass make low interjections on the downbeats as the zombies begin breaking down the door and windows. Then, the upper strings are added, playing a frantic line that gradually speeds up. More instruments join the frantic line, and other supportive parts are added in different instrument sections. The buildup in instrumentation and complexity is an effective technique due to the gradual change. As the drama and fear builds and the zombies get closer to entering the house, the music parallels that fear. During the beginning of this scene, Ben and Harry have their physical confrontation. The music is still equally complex, and the strings have an active line, but the volume is much quieter. This helps the viewer focus on the important plot development during the two characters' conversation. After Harry is shot, the camera focuses back on zombies reaching their limbs through the windows and grabbing Helen. The music begins to increase again in volume, and the trumpets play an even-paced chromatic motive. The upper strings and woodwinds move rapidly with a chromatic line as well. This successfully builds the tension back up in the audience.

After Harry is shot, he wanders into the cellar, and Helen soon follows. When Karen is attacking Helen, the music changes dramatically. A female child's voice echoes Helen's distressed screams. This is effective for several reasons. This musical choice references childhood music, which is a common horror technique. It pulls in the purity aspect of a child committing a gruesome murder, especially with the victim being her mother. Additionally, this is the only time that a voice is used in the score, which makes it stand out more to the audience. Lastly, the cellar is a calm area. Only Karen, Helen and Tom's body are down there. The music reflects this. After the death, the camera switches to back on the first floor of the house and shows the chaos of so many zombies and humans moving. The music abruptly switches back to the fast-paced strings and downbeat-emphasizing low brass, again reflecting the level of calamity

on-screen. When the zombies finally enter the house, the music doesn't become more dramatic; it stays stagnant as it already is loud and busy. Ben locks himself in the basement, and the music decreases in volume and instrumentation as his adrenaline declines. Low brass play a slow melody, and some timpani hits on the beat are used. The camera cuts to morning the next day, and the music drops out. Similar to the first zombie attack scene, the music begins effectively, but it stays at full intensity for too long, and therefore loses its impact. When the zombies broke into the house and flooded the room, there was nowhere for the music to go, because the music was already at its maximum in volume and complexity. To be effective, it needed to be more dynamic. Rather than being very quiet or very loud, the score needed a more gradual change in dynamics, and to have saved enough volume capacity to reach its loudest climax when the zombies broke into the farmhouse.

In *Before I Wake*, the scene opens with Jessie wandering through the orphanage, and there is no background music. The only sound is her breathing and footsteps. Out of nowhere, the Canker Man appears and throws Jessie across the hallway. This is presented as a jump scare¹² with an immediate screech and low tone during the sudden monster attack. The Canker Man slowly approaches Jessie, and soft strings come back in with a tonal, pleasant melody. It begins to sound "off" to the listener with accidentals, screeching strings, then goes back to tonal music. This alternating between tonality and atonality pairs well with the plot. Visually, it's unsettling because the viewer doesn't know if the monster is about to attack Jessie or not. The slow, walking approach by the monster is not what the audience expects. Next, a stepwise¹³ motive on the piano is added on top of the strings slow tones. When Jessie hugs the monster, the music shifts from minor to major and uses more complex music with a melody in the upper strings and

¹² Jump scare- an attempt to scare the audience via a sudden visual and auditory change

¹³ Stepwise- moving up or down in pitch linearly, following the scale of the tonal center

a secondary melody in the cellos. With lots of vibrato and the continued piano motive, it becomes very emotional as the Canker Man morphs into Cody during their hug. The piano part becomes more expansive and disjunct, outlining chords in the left hand and growing a more dynamic melody in the right hand. The strings get louder and higher, building the emotions and maintaining tonality. The music gets even more complex as some violins sustain the beautiful slow, high pitch melody and others offer harmonic support with stepwise staccato notes. It builds in volume as Jessie carries the sleeping Cody out of the orphanage. The music is triumphant and emotional. The music in this scene is incredibly effective; it builds in intensity, complexity and range so subtly that it does not detract from the visuals, yet it makes the scene much more emotional than if it were simply Jessie hugging a monster and it transforming into Cody with a silent background.

Lastly, the ending music for the last movie scenes vary greatly. *Night of the Living Dead* has an unhappy ending, and the music leans toward uncomfortable chromatics. *Before I Wake* has a bittersweet and hopeful ending, with a gradual build into upbeat music. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the music comes back in when Ben is shot by the patrols the next morning. The upper strings play a glissando and trill. The movie ends with black-and-white grainy pictures of dead bodies on the screen, and in-person conversations between patrols reporting the bodies, radio voices. During this, chromatic sliding strings play. This continues as the credits roll on top of the black-and-white pictures, and the audience hears sounds of the government workers assessing the farmhouse scene. Finally, some repeated chords are played by the orchestra, and the movie ends. The music choice for this scene is effective; the movie has an unsatisfactory ending, and the music also ends without strong resolution. After everything that Ben went

through, he dies from a non-zombie related injury. The music reflects this as chromaticism leads the audience feeling unfulfilled.

In *Before I Wake*, the last scene has hopeful music. Jessie and Cody are talking on a bed. Underscoring the dialogue, the strings play slow notes and the piano adds to the chords occasionally. This allows the focus to remain on the characters' conversation, but guides the viewer's emotions to stay calm with tonality. After the last lines are delivered, offering hope about Cody being able to use his gift for good and Cody thanking Jessie for bringing him home, the music shifts. It becomes louder, and an added guitar repeats the same upbeat motive. A solo male singer joins, and it leads into a folk song during the credits. This sudden increase in volume as well as demand for audience's attention signals that the movie is ending. The folk song during the credits gives the film a complete, homey feeling. It effectively lowers the viewer's fear and adrenaline and leaves them in a calm state.

Music in horror movies greatly shapes the film's impact on the viewer. In recent years, films have become more visually-focused than previously due to better camera work, higher budgets and technology advancements. The goal of music in horror films now is to subtly impact the viewer. Rather than equally depend on music and visuals to scare the viewer as done in the past, modern movies use elaborate visuals primarily and, in order to not be over-stimulating, use music as a secondary, less attention-grabbing factor. With sparse music, what is selected for the film's score becomes incredibly important. The improvement in psychological research has allowed the composition of film music to implement the most effective methods. Older films such as *Night of the Living Dead* use less effective techniques such as loud, tonal, complex music with little gradual contrast while newer movies such as *Before I Wake* use less music and focus on atonality over any other music aspect such as melodies or full instrumentation. The music in

Night of the Living Dead is written with enough complexity that it could be played and enjoyed without the accompanying film. On the contrary, *Before I Wake* uses psychologically-backed music in a minimal way to enhance the movie. If the score were played alone, it would be too sparse and simple to enjoy in a concert setting. As the understanding of what creates fear in an audience and how to pair it with visuals evolves, horror movies will only continue to become scarier.

Works Cited

Before I Wake. Directed by Mike Flanagan, Intrepid Pictures, 31 July 2016.

Biancorosso, Giorgio. "The Shark in the Music." *Music Analysis*, vol. 29, no. 1/3, 2010, pp. 306–33.

- Cohen, Annabel J. "Congruence-Association Model and Experiments in Film Music: Toward Interdisciplinary Collaboration." *Music and the Moving Image*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2015, pp. 5–24.
- Donnelly, K. J. "Accessing the Mind's Eye and Ear: What Might Lab Experiments Tell Us About Film Music?" *Music and the Moving Image*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2015, pp. 25–34.
- Heldt, Guido. "Things That Go Bump in the Mind: Horror Films." *Music and Levels of Narration in Film*, Intellect, 2013, pp. 171–94.
- Night of the Living Dead*. Directed by George Romero, Image Ten, 1 Oct. 1968.
- Proverbio, Alice M., et al. "Non-Expert Listeners Show Decreased Heart Rate and Increased Blood Pressure (Fear Bradycardia) in Response to Atonal Music." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 28, 2015.
- Tompkins, Joseph. "What's the Deal with Soundtrack Albums? Metal Music and the Customized Aesthetics of Contemporary Horror." *Cinema Journal*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2009, pp. 65–81.