

<b>Institution:</b> Royal Holloway, University of London
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 35B: Music, Dance and Performing Arts (Music)
<b>Title of case study:</b> Re-awakening Silent Film Music in Britain
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Julie Brown's research on the sounds of 'silent film' exhibition in Britain has had an impact well beyond academia. Her collaborations with film festivals and major film venues plus public lectures have brought about an enhanced public awareness of a lost media art. Through a practitioner/academic network and via practice-based activities involving professional musicians she has had a direct impact on musical practice, and also brought significant performances to the general public in well-attended public events and film festivals at major cinema venues in both Edinburgh and London. Her work has led to enhanced public understanding of the history of the sonic dimension of 'silent cinema' in Britain.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research is Brown's body of research on film music and on 'art' music of the early C20th, which she conducted at Royal Holloway as a Lecturer from 1999, as Senior Lecturer from 2004, and as Reader from 2009. The specific research is that dating from 2009 on the sonic dimension of early film exhibition, including her discovery of numerous otherwise unknown British silent film 'special scores' – that is, full scores specially put together for given silent films. We previously knew of only one such score.</p> <p>In July 2010 she commenced a British Academy research project entitled "Film Fitting" in Britain, 1913-1926' the twin aims of which were to provide the first overview of the professional debate about film fitting over this same period, and to explore possible synchronisations of the surviving films using electronic means. This research has revealed, amongst other things, a more concert oriented approach to film fitting in the UK compared to elsewhere while her electronic 'practice-based' research has led to insights into conceptual and practical dimensions of silent film 'special score' recreation: so far publications include an account of the palimpsest-like problems of film score recreations, and the lively though ephemeral nature of live film prologues of the 1920s. The project also funded Research Assistant Guy Bunce (joined Royal Holloway September 2008) to produce working instrumental parts and a conductor's score for the film <i>Morozko</i>, the entirely original and modernist British score she had found; Brown also acquired a copy of the 40-minute film from Russian film archive Gosfilmofond and produced an exemplary synchronization of the film. This film was brought to public performance in April 2011 at the British Silent Film Festival at the Barbican Cinema, London, on an overlap day between the festival and an AHRC-funded conference that Brown had jointly run.</p> <p>In January 2009 Brown (PI) and Dr Annette Davison of Edinburgh University (CI) had begun a two-year AHRC-funded project 'Beyond Text' Research Network 'The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain'. Based partly on an earlier established network (the AHRC-funded 'Music and the Melodramatic Aesthetic'), the network included leading British and American academics, both affiliated (Austin (2), Birkbeck, Exeter, Indiana, Leeds, Manchester, Warwick) and freelance, from British silent film studies and from film musicology as well as silent film performers (Neil Brand, Stephen Horne, Gillian Anderson, Philip Carli, Donald MacKenzie, Paul Robinson, the band Minima) and industry and institutional stakeholders (BFI silent film curator, British Silent Film Festival organiser Laraine Porter, British Library film specialist Luke McKernan). Two conferences were designed to maximise cross-over between academic and practitioner interests, including public film screenings (Edinburgh Cameo Cinema; Barbican) with live sound and music and partnership with the British Silent Film Festival. The network has stimulated research into this previously unresearched field, producing a collection of essays (jointly edited by Brown), and impacting upon institutions of the cultural sector, performers and audiences alike (see below).</p> <p>This work on silent film music grew from foundational research in film music (numerous articles and book chapters) and of the early C20th, in which area she has published a monograph on Bartók (Ashgate, 2007), Schoenberg (CUP forthcoming 2014), as well as refereed journal</p>

articles, an edited book *Western Music and Race* (CUP 2007: winner of the Ruth Solie Prize of the American Musicological Society, 2008), and book chapters on other early C20th music topics.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Julie Brown and Annette Davison (eds.), *The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2013), including single-author chapter 'Framing the Atmospheric Film Prologue in Britain, 1919–1926'.
2. 'Audio-visual palimpsests: resynchronizing silent films with "special" music', in David Neumeier (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music in Film and Visual Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
3. 'Listening to Ravel, watching *Un coeur en hiver*: cinematic subjectivity and the music-film', *twentieth-century music* 1/2 (2004): 253-75.
4. 'Ally McBeal's postmodern soundtrack', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 126 (November 2001): 251-79.

#### Quality indicators of research

Brown's research on screen music is regularly sought for prestigious edited books, such as the *Oxford Handbook* above, and has also been anthologised: the peer-reviewed *Ally McBeal* article (above) has been anthologized in *Popular Music and Multimedia* edited by Julie McQuinn, part of Ashgate's series *The Library of Essays on Popular Music*. Brown herself has co-edited a ground-breaking peer-reviewed book on British silent film music, and has been recognised as one of three scholars in the international field to have an especially authoritative command of the sub-discipline as a whole. Referring to Brown's film music criticism generally, James Deaville recently wrote in *Music in Television: Channels of Listening* (Routledge, 2011): 'In the first decade of the twenty-first century... disciplinary boundaries have gradually loosened, as reflected in the names of publication series (...), the titles of recent journals (...), and especially the work of scholars such as Robynn J. Stilwell, Julie Brown, and Kevin Donnelly, who seemingly effortlessly cross between screen-media forms in their own research'.

#### Relevant research grants as quality indicators

£50,898 (80% of £63,623 fEC) – The Arts and Humanities Research Council. Principal Investigator (PI = 50%) with Annette Davison (CI - Edinburgh University = 50%) for 'The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain', a two-year Research Network (2009-2011) under the 'Beyond Text' Scheme.  
 £116,786 (80% of £145,983 fEC) – The British Academy Research Development Award (BARDA), for "Film fitting" in Britain, 1913-1926'. Brown was PI (100%) for this two-year project (2010-2012).

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Brown's research on the sounds of early film exhibition has impacted upon cultural life and public discourse by bringing new levels of understanding to practitioners, enthusiasts and institutions in the cultural sector, such as the Barbican Cinema and the British Silent Film Festival. With its public events, its involvement of a ballet conductor to synchronize music with silent film for the first time, and its openness to practitioners in cognate areas such as that of magic lantern, this body of research has also encouraged and effected new cross-overs of expertise and experience between related forms of art and entertainment. Ballet likewise synchronizes silent action with music and the magic lantern was the forerunner of the film projector.

#### Beneficiaries – Group 1 – Silent Film Festivals, Cinemas, Film Clubs and the Public:

Brown's research network activity and her own research on silent film scores have served to deepen and bring alive event programmes of various film venues and festivals for silent-film enthusiasts in ways they would not have been able to achieve alone due to the time and expertise required to undertake the underpinning research. The opening event of the AHRC Network 'The Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain' (2009) involved the Barbican Cinema. As a venue with a regular Sunday afternoon 'Silent Film with Live Music' series, the venue curators recognized the interest of this event for its broader cinema audience, and saw the potential for collaboration to present new

historical recreations. The Network's first conference involved two such reconstructions: one was followed by an on-stage interview and discussion session, which was open to audience questions. A further collaboration and historical recreation followed in April 2011. The network's sound effects workshop (Edinburgh, 13 October 2009) also culminated in a public evening mixed bill film event at Edinburgh's Cameo Cinema involving early film live sound. The British Silent Film Festival takes the musical presentation of its films seriously, so also recognized the value of collaboration, while the Network welcomed the opportunity to encourage the general constituency of silent film enthusiasts to experience and engage with the latest research. Several of those enthusiasts became network members.

In conjunction with the British Silent Film Festival at the Barbican Cinema Brown's historical recreation of Frederick Laurence's score to the film *Morozko* was brought to public performance (see underpinning research (item 2): also grant 'Film fitting' in Britain). After a 10-minute introductory lecture on this little-known film, the music and its composer, Brown led a post-screening Q&A involving conductor and double bass player. A lively question and answer session followed, which enabled members of the public to engage with Brown and the performers. The event, held in the 284-seat Cinema One, was nearly sold out (257 seats were sold), which indicates the level of public engagement achieved. By the end of the final conference at which this performance took place, a British Film Institute silent film curator, opined that 'The work of this project adds real value to the understanding, enjoyability and performance of the films in our collection.'

Media reporting of Brown's silent film score discoveries adds to the public impact of her work. Brown has also contributed in similar ways to other non-specialist audiences: she has spoken to Friends of the Cambridge University Library (February 2012) about a silent film score held in the university manuscripts collection, and to a geography film society, Passengerfilms (25 February 2013), which meets at various locations in London.

#### **Beneficiaries – Group 2 – Performers:**

Brown's research has brought new levels of understanding to various categories of practitioner. None of the roughly twenty professional musicians involved had previously accompanied silent film, yet all found it a revelatory experience—a real insight into what their counterparts in the 1920s would have experienced. Among them was Mervyn Heard, President of the British Magic Lantern Association, who participated in the Edinburgh workshop (13 October 2009) and served as 'film lecturer' for the evening performance. Though a known "reconstructor" of the art of lantern slide lecturing, this was Heard's first attempt at film lecturing and revealed to him the continuities between the practices. The Silent Film and Live Performance workshop at Royal Holloway in October 2010 culminated in a public evening screening of Cecil Hepworth's *Comin' Thro' the Rye* (1923), which had been approached during the day from various musical points of view, and whose original 'live prologue' had also been explored in practice. This latter was a direct outcome of Brown's research on the rediscovered score to *Comin' Thro' the Rye* and also on live film prologues (see underpinning research (items 1 & 2); also grant 'Film fitting' in Britain).

The conductor of *Morozko* had over 20 years of experience with the Birmingham Royal Ballet and was used to fine-grained synchronization of music and movement. Nevertheless he said later that the discipline of working with the running film put into new perspective the relative freedom of his role. It made him appreciate the difficulty dancers faced in planning large stage-movements ahead of time, especially when dancing in groups, and the fact that they might sometimes regard the orchestra (as he did the film), as tyrannical, dictating too precisely time they had to execute complex movements, and making them panic when they realised they were running late. For the composer's grandson, who played double bass, the event had impact of an entirely different order. It first made him appreciate his family history in a completely new way. However, as a highly regarded professional double-bass player himself, someone who frequently performs in orchestral recordings of contemporary Hollywood film scores, he was able to understand the gulf between early and current film music practices: above all, he was able to appreciate the luxury that musicians enjoy today in having time to perfect the synchronization.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**

##### **The Public: media interest in the film score discoveries**

1. 'Lost silent film scores rediscovered by university', BBC Surrey news  
 <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/surrey/hi/people\\_and\\_places/history/newsid\\_8901000/8901031.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/surrey/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8901000/8901031.stm)>
2. 'Film scores given new life: key archive discoveries shed new light on British silent film music', *BBC Music Magazine*, October 2010, p. 12. (full page feature: 'Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews')
3. Pamela Hutchinson, 'Pianists play it again at the silent movies: Musical accompaniment enhanced the mood of silent films, as this year's British Silent Film festival made loud and clear.' *Guardian.co.uk* film blog, 12 April 2011, following the *Morozko* reconstruction  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2011/apr/12/pianists-silent-film-festival-musical-accompaniment>

**Institutions of the Cultural Sector: adding new levels of understanding to the National Archive's film collection**

4. Email from BFI silent film curator and Joint Director of the British Silent Film Festival): 12 April 2011 .

**Performers: impact upon today's performers' understanding of silent film music**

5. Conductor at Birmingham Royal Ballet, and conductor of *Morozko* score reconstruction: videoed Q&A discussion from 8 April 2011 on DVD, plus emails
6. Silent film composer and director of Harmonie Band: emails of 12 April 2011 & 19 April 2012
7. Double bass player of *Morozko* reconstruction (email of 17 April 2012)

**Personal impact: deepening understanding of a family's own position in British musical culture**

8. Chris Laurence, grandson of composer Frederick Laurence; (Q&A discussion from 8 April 2011 on DVD)