

SIMPSONS, *Inc.* (?!) — A Very Short Fascicle on Music's Dramaturgy and Use in Adult Animation Series

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Television animation has been viewed negatively
because of biased and erroneous concerns
about its content and ideology,
and this has severely impacted scholarship
of the genre as a whole[.]
(Perlmutter 2014, 1)

The congress on music in quality tv series (February 27th — March 1st 2015) during which this lecture was held had hardly no speaker talking about cartoon or adult animation music — despite the obvious fact »that cartoon music on television has never been more complex« since the 1990s (Nye 2011, 143). This fact might provoke the question whether or not the animated feature, respectively the cartoon series does or does not belong to the ongoing propagated and frequently discussed ›quality tv‹?!¹ Aren't shows like THE SIMPSONS², SOUTH

1 cf. the numerous articles about Prime Time television animation and American culture in Stabile/Harrison 2003, esp. Wells (15–32), Farley (147–164), Alters (165–185).

2 THE SIMPSONS (USA 1989-present, Matt Groening, James L. Brooks, Sam Simon; 30+ seasons, 660+ episodes, 1 feature film THE SIMPSONS MOVIE (USA 2007, David Silverman); FOX).

PARK³, and FAMILY GUY⁴ part of a new (and subversive) quality tv that are keeping their seats in the prime time slots each for more than a dozen of seasons, thus persistently and profoundly influencing at least one generation? Already in its first season the Simpson family discusses the demographic ambivalence and expected target groups of the generic cartoon:

Marge: »Oh my, all that senseless violence. I don't understand its appeal.«

Bart: »We don't expect you to, Mom.«

Lisa: »If cartoons were meant for adults they'd puttin' them on in prime time.«⁵

That THE SIMPSONS originally starred as an animated short interlude for the prime time TRACEY ULLMAN SHOW⁶ during the late 1980s is one of the earliest examples of this show's way of taking itself and its broadcasting television network FOX not too seriously. The mockery of the FOX network as a supposedly ruthless company and employer came to be a quite frequent way of politi-

3 SOUTH PARK (USA 1997-present, Trey Parker, Matt Stone; 22+ seasons, 308+ episodes, 1 feature film SOUTH PARK: BETTER, LONGER & UNCUT (USA 1999, Trey Parker); Comedy Central).

4 FAMILY GUY (USA 1999-2003, 2005-present, Seth MacFarlane, David Zuckerman; 17+ seasons, 329+ episodes; FOX).

5 *Krusty Gets Busted* (Season 1, Episode 12, dir. by Brad Bird; Production Code: 7G12, Original Air Date: 04.29.1990) Time Code of cited sequence: 0:03:08-0:03:18.

6 THE TRACEY ULLMAN SHOW (USA 1987-1990, James L. Brooks et al.; 4 seasons, 81 episodes; FOX).

cal outspokenness and social criticism not only in *THE SIMPSONS*, but also in *FAMILY GUY* and *AMERICAN DAD!*⁷, Seth MacFarlane's second rendition, one might say: rip-off of the Simpson family in which the creators take a totally different way of criticism with the main character CIA Special Agent Stan Smith being a hardcore conservative republican, president George W. Bush enthusiast and mostly unreflecting believer of FOX's ›propanda machinery‹ — even though this attitude changed due to the political adjustments caused by the Obama administration (Perlmutter 2014, 306pp).

In this paper I'm trying to display more or less common ways of musical setup in American adult animation series of the 21st century. Therefore I will be concentrating on the three first-mentioned series. Nevertheless it is inevitable to know at least a bit about the origin and evolution of both theatrical and television cartoon music. So at first I would like to depict some general aesthetics of the music in cartoon and animated series starting all over with Walt Disney's *SILLY SYMPHONIES*.⁸ The second part of this article will focus on more recent programs, where I will be portraying the main categories of musical usage in contemporary animated series.

7 *AMERICAN DAD!* (USA 2005-present, Seth MacFarlane, Mike Barker, Matt Weitzman; 13+ seasons, 258+ episodes; FOX (2005-2014), TBS (2014-present)).

8 *SILLY SYMPHONIES* (USA 1929-1939, Walt Disney et al.; 75 short films, Walt Disney Productions).

PART ONE.

I. Music as Cartoon's Backbone

The truism of a picture being worth a thousand words
is a crucial dictum in television production.
(Perlmutter 2014, 5)

Not only since Mickey Mouse made his first appearance on the silver screen during the first animated talkie *STEAMBOAT WILLIE* (USA 1928, Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks), the understanding of musical dramaturgy and usage in animated shorts and features, both theatrical and televisional, consistently developed.⁹ From Max Fleischer's early 1920s sound film attempts in his *SONG CAR-TUNES* series and Walt Disney's ›mickey-mousing‹-beginnings in anthropomorphic animal cartoons to the satirizing references of musical high culture — but mainly popular culture —, the animation genre is no longer deniable at the TV landscape since the ›comical turn‹ during the 2000s. After almost one hundred years of successful animation history, the cartoon is constantly growing acknowledgment as a serious genre serving both comedy and drama. *STEAMBOAT WILLIE* hereby marks the beginning of the musical (under-)scoring for animated films, which back then had an average duration of 5-8 min-

9 For further reading about the development of critically acclaimed cartoon music studies, cf. the many discipline-defining articles and volumes by Daniel Goldmark (2002, 2005, 2011, 2014).

utes, functioning as short amusing openers to upcoming feature films or news reels in movie theaters (Cooke 2010, 294).¹⁰

In addition to exploiting music's ability to create continuity and momentum, and its emotional suggestiveness (the latter especially necessary in order to humanize the artificially created imagery), the animated cartoon demonstrated a significant debt to musical techniques popularized in ballet and the circus[.] (Ibid., 287)

The renowned cartoon historian Leonard Maltin not only confirms Mervyn Cooke's statement about »the genre's debt to music as both a dynamic and illustrative device« (Ibid., 287), he goes even further and admits that for the early years of the studio-era animation

[m]usic wasn't just punctuation [...]; it was their backbone. [...] Music and cartoons have gone hand-in-hand since Walt Disney made *Steamboat Willie* in 1928. Music wasn't just an accompaniment for that cartoon, it was what helped sell the movie to the public and to the motion picture industry. (Maltin 2002, ix-x)

By saying that it was the backbone of theatrical cartoon storytelling, Maltin already comments on the contemporary situation in televised animated series

10 Max Fleischer's famous OUT OF THE INKWELL series eventually became part of the monthly *Screen Magazine* of Paramount, »a short news and entertainment program shown before feature films.« (Cavalier 2011, 66). For further reading on Fleischer's music efforts, cf. Jahn 2016, 67p.

claiming that music does not matter as much anymore. Well, I will do my best to prove that music still is an integral part of modern animation programs. In the introductory text to their CARTOON MUSIC BOOK (2002) editors Daniel Goldmark and Yuval Taylor are pointing out the general nature of cartoon music:

Since a cartoon had only a tenth of the time to get its dramatic point across, the music had to adapt; it necessarily needed to be faster in how it punctuated the gags moving by on screen at 24 frames per second. Cartoon music simply had to be more *telling* [emphasis in original] than music for live-action films. (Goldmark/Taylor 2002, xiii)

To pinpoint David Perlmutter's statement of a picture being worth a thousand words, I might add: a tone, chord or sound says more than a thousand pictures. Fully aware of this the Disney Studios invented the synchronization of music and image which eventually became known as ›mickey-mousing‹, that has been improved from every SILLY SYMPHONY to another with Walt Disney's animators studio working alongside the ingenious composer and cinema organist Carl Stalling.¹¹ Those kinds of close relations between music and image helped to

11 »With Stalling at his side, however, Disney eventually streamlined and updated the sound process, creating innovative Silly Symphonies, which were pre-scored animated shorts choreographed to well-known classical works. His first was *The Skeleton Dance* (1929). The close synchronization between music and on-screen movement popularized by this and earlier shorts came to be known as »mickey mousing.« [...] At Disney, Stalling also invented a tick system for synchronizing music to visuals. It was a forerunner to the click track, now the standard process in both live-action and animated features. One of the first click tracks, a reel of unexposed film with holes punched out to make clicks and pops when the film was run on the sound head, was devised by Disney sound effects man Jim Macdonald and used in *The Skeleton Dance*.« (Strauss 2002, 7).

add additional vividness to the inanimate pictures. In doing so music's foremost intrinsic role was to add another comedic degree to the already supposedly comic plot — which makes it even more difficult to take the genre seriously and therefore attract the critical attention of musicologists and film (music) historians. But as Goldmark and Taylor are concluding precisely: »It's about time that the silliest of all musical genres be taken seriously.« (Ibid., xvi) The music in *THE SKELETON DANCE* (USA 1929, Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks) — and consequently in any other *SILLY SYMPHONY* or its animation descendants¹² in general (cf. Jahn 2016, 89) — mainly exploits the ›mickey-mousing‹ of pre-existent (classical) music numbers in a rhetorical, kind of ›recitativo‹ way by underlining an objects motions (the howling wind that moves the tree's branches), body movements (the two fighting graveyard cats) etc. with short, repetitive and circular patterns to enlarge the comical effect of those scenes. Music seems to be heavily pasted onto every possibly moving thing, whether with a brief quirky sound effect (e. g. by the infamous slide whistle) or with an entire, fully-orchestrated music number. For instance the dancing skeletons use their comrades' bones to play along the music of Edvard Grieg's *Trolltog* (Op. 54, No. 3) on each other's bodies — or what's left of it.¹³ This being one of the

12 cf. *HAPPY HARMONIES* (USA 1934-1938, Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising; 36 short films, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) or *LOONEY TUNES* (USA 1930-1969, Tex Avery, Chuck Jones et al.; Warner Bros.) and its sister series *MERRIE MELODIES* (USA 1931-1969, Tex Avery, Chuck Jones et al.; Warner Bros.)

13 A xylophone based arrangement of Grieg's piano piece resembles the sound of rattling bones, for a skeleton's costal arch might be played like a xylophone while the order of the ribs could be compared to a xylophone's physical structure. Carl Stalling, however, has not been the first composer ever to make this comparison: Camille Saint-Saëns already used the bony xylophone sound in *Danse Macabre* (tone poem for orchestra, Op. 40, 1874) to imagine the dancing skeletons. He later on used the same melody in the ›Fossiles‹ segment of his *Le carnaval des animaux* (14-part suite for two pianos and other instruments, 1886) pic-

many examples of Disney dazzling the audience's mind by mashing up diegetically and non-diegetically levelled music. We certainly wonder where the music the skeletons so cheerfully play along to comes from. This concept, howsoever, went on to be one of the most successful techniques to underscore humorous scenes even in full-length animated features — i. e. Disney's grand success *FANTASIA* (USA 1940, Walt Disney), where of course the picture is being synchronized to the preexistent music! — and also in live-action films. Here, of course, the comical effect lies in the citation of this well-known musical treatment from the animation genre, provoking some kind of aesthetical or even semantic dissonance for the viewer. Films like *MARY POPPINS* (USA 1964, Robert Stevenson), *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT* (USA 1988, Robert Zemeckis) or *SPACE JAM* (USA 1996, Joe Pytka) play with this kind of ›false‹ combinations of live-action picture and animation sound by visually mashing up the two film genres.

In this very brief cartoon music introductory I need to leave aside the subject of instrumental semantics. Such composers as Scott Bradley, Hoyt Curtin, Raymond Scott, and Carl Stalling not only established rhythmical scoring techniques, but also harmonical, melodical and instrumental techniques that made

turing some fossils' bones. That Stalling utilizes a scoring aesthetic that Saint-Saëns invented is remarkable inasmuch as the French composer is commonly considered to be the very first composer ever to write a genuine film music. In 1908 Saint-Saëns scored *L'ASSASSINAT DU DUC DE GUISE* (France 1908, Charles le Bargy and André Calmattes) while major parts of his concert pieces also found its way to the movies, being utilized as preexistent stock music. This suggests the conclusion that Stalling knew the œuvre of Camille Saint-Saëns and thus adapted his scoring and instrumental techniques for the music of Disney's *SILLY SYMPHONIES* and later on at the Warner Bros. Studios, scoring multiple *LOONEY TUNES* and *MERRIE MELODIES*. (cf. Barrier 2002, 37-60, esp. 39p and Jahn 2016, 207p)

them and thus their production studios distinguishable from each other.¹⁴ The effectiveness of such musical models later became sort of stereotypes — few might say: ›cliches‹ or ›tropes‹¹⁵ – in animation music history with whom today’s cartoon series are able to goof around.

II. TV Killed the Cinema Star

Cartoon music is among the most engaging and experimental forms of twentieth-century music, exploring the more outrageous extremes of instrumentation, rhythm, and nonmusical sound.
(Strauss 2002, 5)

Even though »[a]nimation came to embrace television sooner than other aspects of the film industry« simply because it »needed to survive« (Perlmutter 2014, 34) the theatrical animated short received a slight set-back having to struggle with the uprising television phenomenon during the 1940-50s (Ibid., 32pp).¹⁶ After developing 30-minute compilations that mainly consisted of three 7-minute-shorts (plus two advertising blocks) for the afternoon television pro-

14 For further information about the above-mentioned composers, the animation studios, and companies they have worked for, e.g. take a look at the highly recommendable compilation of pre-published writings and newly conducted interviews in Goldmark/Taylor 2002 or Goldmark 2005.

15 cf. Prendergast 1992, 180-209, esp. 183-195 | Goldmark 2005, 161pp | Kutnowski 2008, 599-616 (URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03007760802188363>) | Jahn 2016, 147pp.

16 cf. Cooke 2010, 302 | Klein 1993, 243pp.

grams, some studios took up the rather new situation comedy format after encountering groundbreaking live-action sitcoms like I LOVE LUCY¹⁷ and THE HONEYMOONERS¹⁸ (Ibid., 52).¹⁹ In spite its original run of only one season (1955/56), the latter became one of the most influential sitcoms, even regarding the main role allocations, or as Homer Simpson says: »Everything's a rip-off of THE HONEYMOONERS!«²⁰ Whilst Marge confuses her husband Homer with Fred Flintstone (THE FLINTSTONES²¹), Archie Bunker (ALL IN THE FAMILY²²) and Doug Heffernan (THE KING OF QUEENS²³), one could easily add Peter Griffin (FAMILY GUY), Hank Hill (KING OF THE HILL²⁴), Carl Winslow

17 I LOVE LUCY (USA 1951-1957, Desi Arnaz, Jess Oppenheimer; 6 seasons, 181 episodes; CBS).

18 THE HONEYMOONERS (USA 1955/56, Jack Hurdle, Jack Philbin, Stanley Poss; 1 season, 39 episodes; CBS).

19 cf. Adams 1994, 28 and 38.

20 *The Ten-Per-Cent Solution* (Season 23, Episode 8, dir. by Michael Polcino; Production Code: PABF02, Original Air Date: 12.04.2011) Time Code of cited sequence: 00:03:50-00:04:10.

21 THE FLINTSTONES (USA 1960-1966, William Hanna, Joseph Barbera; 6 seasons, 166 episodes; ABC).

22 ALL IN THE FAMILY (USA 1971-1979, Norman Lear; 9 seasons, 210 episodes; CBS).

23 THE KING OF QUEENS (USA 1998-2007, Michael J. Weithorn, David Litt; 9 seasons, 207 episodes; CBS).

24 KING OF THE HILL (USA 1997-2010, Mike Judge, Greg Daniels; 13 seasons, 259 episodes; FOX).

(FAMILY MATTERS²⁵), Bob Belcher (BOB'S BURGERS²⁶), and last but not least, Ralph Kramden (THE HONEYMOONERS). All these shows center a more or less overweight, ›blue-collar‹ working class man and his fairly attractive (house-)wife — both trying to make their living in American suburbia through their weekly encounters. THE FLINTSTONES, often considered to be the ›animated adaption‹ of THE HONEYMOONERS, became the most successful animated series ever to be on prime time television (Ibid., 54), until THE SIMPSONS took the field in 1989, becoming not only the most successful cartoon series but also one of the longest running shows in worldwide television history. With the misadventures of an American »modern stone age family« and its friends, the two FLINTSTONES creators William Hanna and Joseph Barbera brought a new format to the television animation world: consistently narrated and developing stories — in which music no longer has the main part of amplifying the comical situations, as it has to stand back behind the dialogue. One is eager to confirm Leonard Maltin's statement seeing and hearing that the aforementioned ›backbone‹ kept shrinking more and more throughout this first animated sitcom boom (Hilton-Morrow/MacMahan 2003, 74pp). Or does it?! Initial situation comedies like I LOVE LUCY »drew upon the conventions of the film musical« (Rodman 2010, 191) and frequently centered on musical storylines in the show as for instance

25 FAMILY MATTERS (USA 1989-1998, William Bickley, Michael Warren; 9 seasons, 215 episodes; ABC (1989-1997), CBS (1997-1998).

26 BOB'S BURGERS (USA 2011-present, Loren Bouchard, Jim Dauterive; 9+ seasons, 169+ episodes; FOX).

[t]he grounding of music within the narrative anchored the show [I LOVE LUCY] as phenotext, wherein music serves at the pleasure of narrative in a sort of *plaisir* mitigating against visceral *jouissance* [emphasis in original] (Ibid., 191).

Nonetheless, animated shows like THE FLINTSTONES, THE JETSONS²⁷, and many other discovered a new way of musical usage besides building and describing a veritable atmosphere and scenery in which the stories could take place: the main title or opening sequence with an always catchy theme song that enabled melodic and thematic underscoring in multiple instrumental and rhythmical arrangements. That in case of the Hanna-Barbera cartoons turned out to be as famous as the shows itself, as the frequent use and ›reproductions‹ of the FLINTSTONES' and JETSONS' theme songs or even their entire opening sequences on THE SIMPSONS, FAMILY GUY²⁸ et al. confirm.

Unlike live-action sitcoms, the animated series have the ability to react immediately and also rather excessively on current cultural, political or any other events and developments in the (mostly American) society (Perlmutter 2014, 3) and therefore could comment on it in their own environment (Ibid., 54p). In these particular environments, music also made its way to the diegetic level of storytelling, being part of the narration as background music to create a realistic

27 THE JETSONS (USA 1962/63, 1985-1987, William Hanna, Joseph Barbera et al.; 3 seasons, 75 episodes; ABC (1962/63), Syndication (1985-1987)).

28 cf. *Meet The Quagmires* (Season 5, Episode 18, dir. by Dan Povenmire and Chris Robertson; Production Code: 5ACX13, Original Air Date: 05.20.2007).

setting or as a cornerstone to an episode's plot.²⁹ As Fred Flintstone is quite an aficionado of jazz and swing music and himself a »versatile« musician, Hanna-Barbera's chief composer and musical director Hoyt Curtin created scores in his and Fred's most favourite fashion: 1940-50s big band and modern jazz, commonly aside a sweetish and enchanting chamber musical tone³⁰. With its often slight allusions to silent film or vaudeville musical numbers and the swing music of Henry Mancini and Nelson Riddle, Curtin's ideas fit well with the contemporary spirit and with the taste of its time (cf. Hanna 1996, 4 and Jahn 2016, 158p).

With *The Jetsons*, just as with *The Flintstones*, Hanna-Barbera demonstrated that it was possible for television animation to achieve a prime-time [adult] audience — albeit at a cost. The characters and situations had to be structured in a way that made them acceptable, and this often involved the use of social and artistic stereotyping rather than genuine creativity. (Perlmutter 2014, 62p)

Despite all of Curtin's many efforts in television animation musical direction, rather the same »artistic stereotyping« could be certified to the mainly functional underscore music of Hanna-Barbera Productions' early animated sitcoms.

29 cf. THE JETSONS' *A Date With Jet Screamer* (Season 1, Episode 2, dir. by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera; no Production Code, Original Air Date: 09.30.1962). The character of singer Jet Screamer resembles the look and sound of 1960's american pop singer Ricky Nelson, who at that time was one of the upcoming teenage idols, however David Perlmutter compares Screamer rather to an Elvis Presley-like singer (Perlmutter 2014, 62).

30 One of Curtin's main formations consists of flute, oboe, bassoon, and chimes/glockenspiel. The better part of Curtin's sketched music material mostly got arranged by Jack Stern who might be responsible for this iconic formation (Hansen and Kress 2002, 171).

Even though 80-90% or more (Goldmark/Taylor 2002, 169) of an average FLINTSTONES episode utilized music to underscore and spotlight the show's sense of humor, i. e. with the multiple variations of the »Meet The Flintstones« theme song³¹, it might still be stated that animation music lost its 'backbone' quality and got diminished to a simply amusement providing and confirming background. Nevertheless, it would be harsh to equal Hoyt Curtin's music for this ›limited animation‹ programs³² as ›limited composition‹³³ given that huge parts of music were used over and over again, from one show to another, to paste an entire 22-minute episode with underscore music. To conclude this first part I quote Homer Simpson once again, who mentions the quality and importance of situation comedy shows, in this case of SEINFELD³⁴ which became a major hit and eventually a huge part of American pop culture:

31 »Meet The Flintstones« actually has not been the theme song before the third season (1962-1963). Until then an instrumental melody called »Rise And Shine« functioned as the opening sequence accompaniment, while »Meet The Flintstones« appeared only as underscoring music.

32 The 'limited animation' practice had been standardized for television animation programs by Hanna and Barbera »in order to meet the shorter deadlines of television« (Perlmutter 2014, 44). Historian Ted Sennett describes the 'limited animation' procedure as follows: »As opposed to the intricate details of classical animation, a few moving parts of the principal characters were animated and then photocopied on to the cells to simulate talking or simple action. The character walks and other standard movements were codified and reused in cycles, while a single background could serve for entire sequences.« (Sennett 1989, 49).

33 Konstantin Jahn's observation on Mancini's (ergo: Curtin's) everyday-orchestration being of a »specific minimalistic economy« and »less complex or even avantgardistic harmonics« might increase the argument for a 'limited composition' technique suitable for Curtin's music (cf. Jahn 2016, 158p).

34 SEINFELD (USA 1989-1998, Jerry Seinfeld, Larry David, George Shapiro et al.; 9 seasons, 180 episodes; NBC).

This is educational television!

Our people learn what humor is just because of the canned laughter.³⁵

It would be worth discussing, if music has a comparable ›pedagogical‹ function in animated programs — for instance regarding the full-length underscores in Hanna-Barbera cartoons that might be compared to the usual laughter track. But even more debate-worthy seems to be the fact that the statement by Homer Simpson is originally from the German dub version³⁶ and cannot be found in the original script.

PART TWO.

III. Categories of Musical Usage in Adult Animation Series

a. My Cartoon Education

To begin with, I am taking the freedom to deliver some personal informations on the following segment that communicates my individual background through animated series and its music — as this article is written both by a

35 *That 90's Show* (Season 19, Episode 11, dir. by Mark Kirkland; Production Code: KABF04, Original Air Date: 01.27.2008) Time Code of cited sequence: 0:08:06-0:08:12.

36 »Das ist Bildungsfernsehen! Nur durch die eingespielten Lacher weiß unser Volk, was Humor ist.«

composer-musicologist and a lifelong fan. Born into the Generation Y in 1986 I grew up on and know these shows quite well: THE SIMPSONS became one of my most faithful daily companions. I followed Homer and his family on dozens of road trips, heard the Springfieldians sing about their beloved *Maison Derriere*³⁷ and I still get goosebumps hearing Sideshow Bob's diabolic leitmotif — which is, as far as I know, the only cartoon character of the 21st century to have a personalized musical theme.³⁸ The leitmotif is derived from Bernard Herrmann's main theme music for CAPE FEAR (USA 1962, J. Lee Thompson), as is the whole story part of the episode *Cape Feare*³⁹, in which Sideshow Bob, in spite of being on parole, is eagerly trying to kill Bart.

SOUTH PARK had a charming start-up with their childish and paper-cut-like animation⁴⁰ and never-seen-before subversive and not-so-childish offensive humor. Their creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone once stated⁴¹ that they just wanted to make a show about a bunch of 8-year-olds in the way kids actually talk and

37 *Bart After Dark* (Season 8, Episode 5, dir. by Dominic Polcino; Production Code: 4F06, Original Air Date: 11.24.1996) The Song *We Put The Spring In Springfield* was composed by Alf Clausen and Ken Keeler.

38 Alf Clausen on the idea of a leitmotif for Sideshow Bob and who came up with it: »Well, it was mutual, but it was my suggestion. I brought it up a number of times, and I said, at this particular point, with his whole mindset going on, it really serves us well to bring that thing back and remind people where he came from.« (Goldmark/Taylor 2002, 243).

39 *Cape Feare* (Season 5, Episode 2, dir. by Rich Moore; Production Code: 9F22, Original Air Date: 01.07.1993).

40 Sean Nye speaks of DIY (do it yourself) animation which he compares to the MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS animations of Terry Gilliam (Nye 2011, 147).

41 60 MINUTES (USA 1979-present, Don Hewitt; CBS) Season 44, Episode 1 (Original Air Date: 09.25.2011).

came up with the onwards cussing, naive and always imaginative boys in a little Colorado town. The show's deliberate low achievements in animation — that of course reflects »the child's world of the protagonists« (Nye 2011, 147) — also corresponds with its musical outcome of the early seasons that combines »an appropriation of sitcom and film music practices in cartoons and [...] a new genre system of music« (Ibid., 144), that speaks of a great variety of SOUTH PARK's artistic standard. This series and its musical approach could most fittingly be described with the German buzzword ›niveauflexibel« (›level flexible«), which also refers to the expected wide demographics SOUTH PARK is marketing for and targeted at (cf. Ott 2003, 220pp); from a young through a probably blue-collar audience up to (politicized) intellectual upper classes.

Whilst Homer Simpson says that everything seems to be a rip-off of THE HONEYMOONERS one might also go further by saying: Everything after 1989 is a rip-off of THE SIMPSONS, as it happens to be with the two, respectively three animated series Seth MacFarlane developed for FOX (Perlmutter 2014, 243pp). The first time I saw FAMILY GUY it took my breath away — I knew immediately: Someday I'm going to write something about that show! Back then, I couldn't even know I would ever become a musicologist. Creator Seth MacFarlane's totally new way of narrating a cartoon series is exceptional to me. Besides the often controversial dispute about plagiarizing THE SIMPSONS — you could compare this to the HONEYMOONERS-FLINTSTONES controversy — FAMILY GUY really did change the way animated series had been narrated after the year 2000. I will use the term ›comical turn« to describe what I'm referring to later on.

b. Developments

Over the years, all of these shows have developed drastically in animation. The crudely hand-drawn early episodes became highly sophisticated computer animated episodes (cf. Nye 2011, 147). Moreover one can also notice an aesthetic change, I'm almost inclined to say: an improvement of the musical cues of the shows⁴²; e. g. the Batman-esque super hero episodes of SOUTH PARK's season 14.⁴³ This show developed into further several narrative widening plots from one single episode to a whole season — what to my knowledge is unique for an animated, hence comedy series. This kind of storyline development can rather be seen in a drama or even a mini series — what SOUTH PARK silently became over the last years, shortening its seasons down to 10 episodes. As I am not able to describe the long-standing aesthetic developments of neither of the three shows I focus in the analysis further below on some fundamental and some special scenes. Alas(!), 3 series containing 69 combined seasons with close to 1300 episodes within an approximated duration of nearly 29,000 min. — and that will already be outdated in less than one year from today. So, how to sum up that wide variety of funny and musical moments? It is a bold venture that simply has to fail! Being sure that not every best musical moment of any of these

42 cf. SOUTH PARK's constant variations of the opening sequence that also 'embellishes' the theme song as »[t]hese remixes were carefully produced to keep SOUTH PARK trendy« (Nye 2011, 148).

43 *Coon 2: Hindsight* (Season 14, Episode 11, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1411, Original Air Date: 10.27.2010) | *Mysterion Rises* (Season 14, Episode 12, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1412, Original Air Date: 11.03.2010) | *Coon vs. Coon & Friends* (Season 14, Episode 13, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1413, Original Air Date: 03.10.2010).

programs could be mentioned I would like to share some of what I consider to be significant visual-musical segments.

Even though THE SIMPSONS, SOUTH PARK, and FAMILY GUY might not have a lot to do with each other, they all have at least one thing in common: the (sometimes extensive) use of music, particularly songs with which they try to spoof American culture, religion, politics, and society. But they all established distinct musical directions that tremendously differ from each other. THE SIMPSONS mostly concentrate on popular contemporary songs and musical numbers that are always quite current in the American media referencing movies and artists by assimilating to its artificial appearance. An example hereof could be seen in *How I Wet Your Mother*⁴⁴ which loosely retells the plot of INCEPTION (USA 2010, Christopher Nolan), when his family and Dr. John Frink are helping Homer to find out why he wets the bed again. As I earlier stated, one sound could say more than a thousand pictures, Alf Clausen's music leaves the Springfield universe through the iconic (usually harps and strings dominated) opening chord of the SIMPSONS' title sequence, being modulated into a Hans Zimmer-esque soundscape after »actually entering dad's dreams[.]« (0:09:25-0:09:55). That SIMPSONS composer Alf Clausen recomposes an INCEPTION-like soundtrack is one of the major differences between THE SIMPSONS and FAMILY GUY which mainly uses original, preexistent material to retell a popular story (e. g. in the three STAR WARS specials⁴⁵), sometimes putting it in front of a fairly dif-

44 *How I Wet Your Mother* (Season 23, Episode 16, dir. by Lance Kramer; Production Code: PABF08, Original Air Date: 03.11.2012).

45 *Blue Harvest* (Season 6, Episode 1, dir. by Dominic Polcino; Production Codes: 5ACX16/5ACX22, Original Air Date: 09.23.2007 → Peter retells STAR WARS: EPISODE 4

ferent background [i. e. in *Long John Peter*⁴⁶ where the original soundtrack by Erich Wolfgang Korngold for THE SEA HAWK (USA 1940, Michael Curtiz) is used to underscore a pirate-like car chase] to create the comical effect to recognizing a certain piece of music that somehow actually fits for the depicted scene, but is totally taken out of its original context. SOUTH PARK's rendition of the INCEPTION plot and music shows a rather different approach of musical references. By alluding to the iconic *Mind Heist* music of Zach Hemsey⁴⁷, which actually cannot be heard in the original movie, but solely in its third theatrical trailer⁴⁸, the creators are clearly aiming for another comic effect: the pathetic and poorly executed attempt of re-enacting major cultural products. In *Insheep-tion*⁴⁹, the rhythmical patterns of Hemsey's music are sung by one of the two

— A NEW HOPE (USA 1977, George Lucas) | *Something, Something, Something, Dark Side* (Season 8, Episode 20, dir. by Dominic Polcino; Production Codes: 6ACX21/6ACX22, Original Air Date: 05.23.2010 → Peter retells STAR WARS: EPISODE 5 — THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (USA 1980, Irvin Kershner) | *It's A Trap!* (Season 9, Episode 18, dir. by Peter Shin; Production Codes: 7ACX21/7ACX22, Original Air Date: 05.22.2011 → Peter retells STAR WARS: EPISODE 6 — RETURN OF THE JEDI (USA 1983, Richard Marquand) | Though all these episodes feature the original music from the three mentioned STAR WARS movies by the uncredited composer John Williams there is also additional music by Walter Murphy throughout the episodes, mainly being used as incidental music or for scenes unrelated to STAR WARS scripts.

46 *Long John Peter* (Season 6, Episode 12, dir. by Dominic Polcino; Production Code: 6ACX06, Original Air Date: 05.04.2008).

47 Zach Hemsey — *Mind Heist* (EP, released as a Digital Album in 05/2011; <http://www.zackhemsey.com/#!/albums-z-eps/cp5z> Retrieved on November 4, 2019).

48 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xitHF0IPJSQ> Retrieved on November 4, 2019.

49 *Insheep-tion* (Season 14, Episode 10, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1410, Original Air Date: 10.20.2010).

scientists who explain the inception process: »It's not stupid at all! Pinkerton, you explain the logic and I'll provide the background.« (0:08:20-0:08:52)

c. Comical Turn

With *FAMILY GUY*, creator Seth MacFarlane established a fancy type of old show tune and Broadway-esque referential music along with the two composers Ron Jones and Walter Murphy. The regular narratological break through the fourth wall or the plot unrelated insertions — mostly initiated through the comparative words ›when‹, ›then‹, or ›like‹ — enable huge alterations in storytelling. These so called cutaway gags occasionally come hand-in-hand with musical numbers:

Peter: Man, I hope he lets me on his team this year.

I haven't been part of a team since I was with the Four Peters.⁵⁰

Four identical looking Peter Griffins perform Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (Serenade No. 13 for Strings in G Major, K. 525, First Movement, Allegro) only by laughing in Peter's iconic laughter. That is what I would call a ›comical turn‹, as these cutaway gags not only are mostly incoherent turns, respectively narratological twists that have nothing to do with the cur-

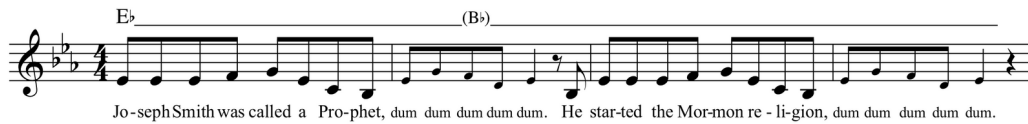
⁵⁰ *Model Misbehavior* (Season 4, Episode 10, dir. by Sarah Frost; Production Code: 4ACX13, Original Air Date: 07.24.2005) Time Code of cited sequence: 00:00:41-00:01:17.

rent plot. The sheer preposterous way of storytelling and plot-breaking FAMILY GUY is doing initiates a sort of paradigm shift to the generic comedic narrative — not just regarding television animation. To determine and to proof such a general cultural turn in the American comedic script writing and live-action or animation realisation one would have to conduct a serious study that moves beyond the limitation of this paper. Familiar comments like ›THE SIMPSONS changed the landscape of television animation!‹, ›SOUTH PARK really did change today’s animation programs!‹ or ›FAMILY GUY took the animation genre to a whole new level!‹ illustrate the influences these three shows had and still have on the animation genre. The way in which for instance FAMILY GUY has been impacting general storytelling (live-action and animation as well as series and features) has its obvious predecessors and apparently most striking influences in the Warner Bros.’ programs of LOONEY TUNES, MERRIE MELODIES and ANIMANIACS⁵¹ which often operated with comparative narration techniques.

What makes SOUTH PARK a special animated series, is its point of view. Seen through the wondrous eyes of 8 to 10 year-old children the cornerstone of this show is mainly a sort of ›hyperbolic overacting‹ that seems to be blown totally out of proportion when compared to real life circumstances. One could argue that this would apply for any cartoon series, because in the end they are all fictitious. But SOUTH PARK actually brings the audacity of artistic and realistic license to a whole new level. The series uses less musical numbers to underline

51 ANIMANIACS (USA 1993-1998, Tom Ruegger; 5 seasons, 99 episodes; Fox Kids (1993-1995), The WB (1995-1999)).

its humor, even though Sean Nye estimates that »the role of music [...] has been central to SOUTH PARK’s success« (Nye 2011, 143). Therefore, the show deploys music mainly on a diegetic level as being part of the action. In *All About Mormons*⁵², an invisible chorus tells the story of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism:



im. 1 »Joseph Smith was called a Prophet« from *All About Mormons*

(00:04:48–00:05:00), transcribed by Peter Motzkus

The simple-hearted and pure-minded melody, which makes it »abundantly clear that the foundational mythoi of Mormonism is too preposterous to be believed« (Daas 2012, 83), functions as an auctorial narrator that tells us the story from his omniscient point of view. As the viewer realizes later on the sung narration couldn’t resist to comment and evaluate the uprising of Joseph Smith. Almost every new beginning of a phrase starts a half-tone higher than the one before, which finally leads to the confrontation of Smith’s co-worker and financial supporter Martin Harris with his wife Lucy:

⁵² *All About Mormons* (Season 7, Episode 12, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 712, Original Air Date: 11.19.2003).

Chorus:»Martin went home to his wife, dum dum dum dum
dum. And showed her pages from the Book of
Mormon, dum dum dum dum dum.«

M. H.: »And so Joseph Smith put his head into a hat, and
read to me what the golden plates said. I wrote it
all down and we're gonna publish it into a book.«

[Music off.]

L. H.: »Martin, how do you know he isn't just making stuff
up and pretending he's translating off golden plates?«

Chorus:»Lucy Harris smart smart smart, smart smart
smart smart smart.«

M. H.: »Why would he make it up?«

Chorus:»Martin Harris dumb da-dumb.«

(00:17:39-00:18:11)

Nye's observation that the co-creators Parker and Stone built up a »musical genre system« which contains very diverse musical genres from classical and jazz through Hollywood blockbuster and cartoon music to rock, punk, soul, pop, and country, can be seen in several appearances of musicians and music groups throughout the series (Nye 2011, 143). One of the more recent musical events on SOUTH PARK was the development of a storyline that spanned over an entire season showing one of the supporting characters (Randy Marsh) as the actual person behind female New Zealand pop artist Lorde.⁵³ »While *The Simpsons* [and *FAMILY GUY*] tend[s] to assume considerable knowledge from its

53 »Lorde's« first appearance is in *Gluten Free Ebola* (Season 18, Episode 2, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1802, Original Air Date: 10.01.2014). He/She appears in five other episodes during the 18th season.

viewers of broad expanses of high and popular culture, SOUTH PARK is directed more to pop and subcultural history concerned with Generations X and Y« (Ibid., 153).

d. Recitativo ed Aria: Songs

Another category of musical usage in adult animation series are songs, which I recommend to split in the two subcategories ›recitativo‹ and ›aria‹ both being part of the narrative diegetically. It stands out that FAMILY GUY uses the highly intriguing, versatile, humorous ways of musical narration through song. The dramatic ambivalence between totally serious and utterly hilarious varies from one moment to another. To reach that goal the soundtrack often resorts to pre-existent musical numbers that are supposedly largely known for its actual filmic origin. In *Baby, You Knock Me Out*⁵⁴ Lois becomes a famous pugilist — the episode loosely reconnects story plots of the ROCKY saga (USA 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1990, John G. Avildsen, Sylvester Stallone) and features the theme song »Eye Of The Tiger« by Survivor from the third ROCKY feature. The final scenes of Lois' last fight against Deirdre Jackson (00:18:52-00:19:40) is accompanied by the instrumental opening bars of the Survivor song with its repetitive keynote c and the syncopated riffs that fittingly musicalize the flying and hitting fists.⁵⁵ When these instrumental opening bars end one awaits to hear the original

54 *Baby, You Knock Me Out* (Season 9, Episode 5, dir. by Julius Wu; Production Code: 8ACX05, Original Air Date: 11.14.2010).

55 The ancient Greek word *συγκοπή* means ›collide‹ or ›crash together‹. Both the Survivor song and the ROCKY theme music (including »Gonna Fly Now«) by Bill Conti make use of this apparent relation between a musical clash of two notes compared to the violent actions

Survivor voice of lead singer Dave Bickler. But this of course doesn't happen! The camera moves rapidly away from the Squared Circle and moves along the ringside where Lois' husband Peter stands lonely in front of a microphone booth, singing the »Eye Of The Tiger« song. He immediately gets interrupted by his friend Quagmire who pushes him away and outside of the picture with Peter's defenseless attempt to apologize. But to whom? And for what? For interrupting the fight, for mocking the song, or for the absurd references of the ROCKY franchise? If not directly quoted as preexistent music FAMILY GUY also parodies certain musical styles or songs to provoke an association to its possible original content, such as the Disney-esque musical numbers »I Need A Jew«⁵⁶ or the Emmy award-winning »It's A Wonderful Day For Pie«.⁵⁷

While the »Eye Of The Tiger« music in *Baby, You Knock Me Out* is an example for the ›recitativo‹ subcategory of song usage, because of its scene describing, underscoring, and forwarding type, full-length songs like the mentioned Disney parodies are part of the ›aria‹ subcategory for their (nearly) action stopping

in the Squared Circle.

56 *When You Wish Upon A Weinstein* (Season 3, Episode 22, dir. by Dan Povenmire; Production Code: 2ACX05, Original Air Date: 12.10.2004) »The song was the subject of controversy as the Bourne Music Co., who was the original publisher of »When You Wish Upon a Star«, which this song is a parody of, filed a lawsuit against several Fox divisions, Cartoon Network, Fuzzy Door Productions, FAMILY GUY producer Seth MacFarlane and composer Walter Murphy, claiming copyright infringement over »I Need a Jew«, seeking unspecified damages and to halt the program's distribution. The suit claims harm to the value of the song due to the offensive nature of the lyrics.« (Online: http://familyguy.wikia.com/wiki/I_Need_a_Jew; latest access: 04.11.2019).

57 *Road To The Multiverse* (Season 8, Episode 1, dir. by Greg Colton; Production Code: 7ACX06, Original Air Date: 09.27.2009).

manner. In *Foreign Affairs*⁵⁸ Peter Griffin, while mentioning mankind's many historical events, introduces his children to »the gayest music video of all-time«. ⁵⁹ After the clip he turns directly to the viewer by saying: »That happend and we all let it happen.« (00:10:45-00:13:45). As the time code indicates the whole approx. three-minute-long music video is shown, what seems quite unbearable for the audience's attention which intentionally is drawn from the plot-line. It does provide a similar effect as the story-telling strategies in the opera dramaturgy. The song, not being part of the actual plot, does not at all forward the action. On the other hand this kind of distraction could be employed by characters when they break the fourth wall, followed the subsequent address: »...I could need a distraction... [break] Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Conway Twitty!«. ⁶⁰ The music is now part of the plot, according to the authors'/directors' intention to distract the audiences' focus.

e. Opening Sequences

To determine the already mentioned disparities between THE SIMPSONS, SOUTH PARK, and FAMILY GUY, a look at the intros of the three shows might

58 *Foreign Affairs* (Season 9, Episode 17, dir. by Pete Michels; Production Code: 8ACX19, Original Air Date: 05.15.2011).

59 *Dancing In The Street* (David Bowie, Mick Jagger; William Stevenson (1964) Alan Winstanley, Clive Langer (1985)).

60 cf. *Bill And Peter's Bogus Journey* (Season 5, Episode 13, dir. by Dominic Polcino; Production Code: 5ACX07, Original Air Date: 03.11.2007) | *Peter's Daughter* (Season 6, Episode 7, dir. by Zac Moncrief; Production Code: 5ACX21, Original Air Date: 11.25.2007) | *The Juice Is Loose* (Season 7, Episode 9, dir. by Cyndi Tang; Production Code: 6ACX13, Original Air Date: 03.15.2009).

highlight the different aspirations in music-making and its use throughout the series. Danny Elfman's SIMPSONS intro recalls the aesthetic values of a Hoyt Curtin score. Excessive use of xylophones and chimes are perpetually repeating and modulating the five-tone main theme, additionally combined with fast rhythmical patterns by percussion and brass that are accompanied by de- and ascending whole tone scales from the strings — that try to match the »finger-busters« of Curtin's JETSONS theme (Hansen/Kress 2002, 172). The musical and visual allusions to the Hanna-Barbera cartoons of the 1960s are obvious. In his explicit in-depth analysis of the SIMPSONS' opening sequence, Martin Kutnowski points out that

the soundtrack for the initial sequence of *The Simpsons* encapsulates the essential underlying themes of the show, introducing the physical, behavioral, and psychological profiles of the five family members plus the suburban American culture that surrounds them in the town of Springfield. (Kutnowski 2008, 599)

The »luscious symphonic overture« (Ibid., 599), in which »music, image and narrative are all logically threaded as to project absurdity and irony« (Ibid., 603), is a conglomerate of multiple well-known musical styles (cf. Jahn 2016, 236p). Allan Neuwirth retells the story of SIMPSONS creator Matt Groening trying to envision his idea of a theme song, that the acclaimed composer Danny Elfman obviously followed through:

Groening decided that he wanted a lush, fully orchestrated, yet irreverent theme that would prime the TV audience for what was coming. The producers found the perfect composer in Danny Elfman, who a few years earlier had created a wildly original score for Tim Burton's first feature, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985). To give Elfman a better idea of what he was imagining, Groening gave him a sampling tape he'd cobbled together — featuring a nutty mix of material that included a Frank Zappa electric shaver jingle, a »Teach Your Parrot to Talk« recording, some cuts from Nino Rota's *Juliet of the Spirits* soundtrack, and *The Jetsons* theme music. (Neuwirth 2003, 40p)

Not just in sound but also in picture does the SIMPSONS intro commemorate the one of THE JETSONS (Kutnowski 2008, 607). The similarities between these two sequences eventually led to a »reproduction« of the latter in one of the latest SIMPSONS episodes.⁶¹

Les Claypool: »I'm goin' down to SOUTH PARK / gonna have myself a time.«

Kyle & Stan: »Friendly faces everywhere / humble folks without temptation.«

61 In *My Fare Lady* (Season 26, Episode 14, dir. by Michael Polcino; Production Code: TABF07, Original Air Date: 02.15.2015) the SIMPSONS intro actually retells the opening sequence of THE JETSONS, the one show that mainly influenced the art direction as well as the musical direction of the SIMPSONS' own opening sequence. Alf Clausen masterly recomposes the original Hoyt Curtin theme song by also adding the adapted lyrics. To sum it up once again: Danny Elfman (1989) writes a theme song that commemorates the old Hoyt Curtin theme (1962) and Alf Clausen (2015) rearranges the Elfman theme, approaching an even more Curtin-esque SIMPSONS theme song.

Les Claypool: »I'm goin' down to SOUTH PARK / gonna
leave my woes behind.«

Eric: »Ample parking day or night / people
shouting: ›Howdy, neighbor!‹.«

Les Claypool: »I'm headin' down to SOUTH PARK / gonna
see if I can't unwind.«

Kenny: *inarticulate mumbling*⁶²

Les Claypool: »So come on down to SOUTH PARK / and
meet some friends of mine.«

SOUTH PARK has a different strategy of introduction. Besides its welcoming attitude — »So come on down to SOUTH PARK / and meet some friends of mine« —, the short and cacophonous intro (composed and performed by the American rock band PRIMUS, with singer Les Claypool featuring in the sequence) seems rather useless and dispensable from a musicological perspective. Even though Sean Nye claims that the PRIMUS intro is »important« (Nye 2011, 148), because it typifies the punk rock world of the show's creators as well as its protagonists, it clearly shows what the creators are aiming for in their initial years: the badly executed musical performance of the theme song — which has no further meaning for the show at all! — that tries to mess with aesthetic conventions of highly polished and catchy, iconic theme songs, such as the ones of THE SIMPSONS and the MacFarlane programs. Therefore the music is often ›full

62 The continuing joke of Kenny not being understood by the viewer but by his friends is already apparent in the show's very first opening sequence (1997). There are a couple of ›officially‹ published and confirmed lyrics to Kenny's lines (http://southpark.wikia.com/wiki/South_Park_Theme; retrieved on November 4, 2019).

frontal descriptive« so each viewer might catch the joke. You could say that SOUTH PARK is — musically speaking — not very subtle. Precisely that seems to be the whole point of SOUTH PARK's early attempts: crudely done, badly sung, and weirdly funny in its overall absurdity. By saying that the intro has no further meaning for the show I mean that the song never appears diegetically during the episodes. While the two other series occasionally make fun of its main themes, as for instance Bart whistles the SIMPSONS motif only to be silenced by his mother when he is asked to stop piping that »annoying tune«. ⁶³ Totally out of the blue the Simpsons' world collides with the real world where the viewer is left behind trying to figure out: How could they possibly get to know this melody? Well, of course: the high school band is constantly playing it in every title sequence... The employment of the theme music is on the one hand a practical joke of self-reflexivity and self-referentiality and on the other hand the music seems to function as a sort of a collective memory of a town's population (and sometimes beyond). ⁶⁴ The theme itself becomes part of the soundscape of Springfield.

63 *Bart Gets Famous* (Season 5, Episode 12, dir. by Susie Dieter; Production Code: 1F11, Original Air Date: 02.03.1994) Time Code of cited sequence: 00:01:06-00:01:15.

64 cf. *Brother, Can You Spare Two Dimes?* (Season 3, Episode 24, dir. by Rich Moore; Production Code: 8F23, Original Air Date: 08.27.1992) | *Krusty Gets Kancelled* (Season 4, Episode 22, dir. by David Silverman; Production Code: 9F19, Original Air Date: 05.13.1993) | *22 Short Films About Springfield* (Season 7, Episode 21, dir. by Jim Reardon; Production Code: 3F18, Original Air Date: 04.14.1996) | *Midnight Towboy* (Season 19, Episode 3, dir. by Matthew Nastuk; Production Code: JABF21, Original Air Date: 10.07.2007).

Lois Griffin: »It seems today / that all you see / is
violence in movies / and sex on tv.«

Peter Griffin: »But where are those good / old-
fashioned values, ...«

entire family: »... on which we used to rely?
Lucky there's a family guy.
Lucky there's a man who / positively can
do / all the things that make us ...«

Stewie Griffin: »... laugh and cry!«

entire family: »He's / a / Fam- / -'ly / Guy!«

FAMILY GUY re-established the flashy big band and Broadway sound.⁶⁵ The song about »good, old-fashioned values« can be heard on the soundtracks by composers Walter Murphy and Ron Jones as well. In difference to SOUTH PARK, FAMILY GUY has, in fact, a critical aspiration to its musical outcome. The every once in a while exaggerated seriousness and sometimes the unexpected narratological break of musical usage is what accounts for FAMILY GUY's humor. Unpredictable changes of established conventions is one of the keen trademarks of Seth MacFarlane's programs, usually combining two or more apparently opposing cultural objects, mixing it into one special FAMILY GUY moment. As some SOUTH PARK boys had to deal with the fact that »The

65 In 2005 Seth MacFarlane and Walter Murphy also produced the 'live' music album FAMILY GUY: *Live in Vegas* (Geffen Records B0004569-00) which portraits once again not just both MacFarlane's admiration for the »rich, lush arrangements of the classic era of Rat Pack Vegas shows«, which they »combined with the fart jokes of today« (MacFarlane 2005, from the CD booklet). But it also confirms MacFarlane as a versatile singer and musician.

Simpsons already did it!«⁶⁶, FAMILY GUY had to be the first series to ever mock other title sequences by copycatting entire intros of their shows, including the theme music.⁶⁷ By adapting to those totally different aesthetic concepts, as for instance of the LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE⁶⁸ (*Livin' On a Prayer*, Season 10, Episode 12). Seth MacFarlane widens his show's own look. Or is he? The often quoted series and movies from the 1970-80s exposes MacFarlane as a child of his time. But it remains questionable whether the main part of the 18-49 demographic understands the allusions FAMILY GUY is doing (see above Sean Nye's observation that SOUTH PARK explicitly directs pop and subcultural knowledge its Generations X and Y audience might be »in the know« of (Nye 2011, 153p). Making fun of himself MacFarlane gives the Griffin family the opportunity to comment on this particular situation when mother Lois argues: »Yah, he watched tv in the '80s. We get it.«⁶⁹ Here we recognize the deliberate provocation of a fairly questionable clash of the cartoon world with our real world again. The most interesting thing is that those kind of ›stolen‹ intros do

66 *The Simpsons Already Did It* (Season 6, Episode 7, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 607, Original Air Date: 07.26.2002).

67 cf. *And I'm Joyce Kinney* (Season 9, Episode 9, dir. by Dominic Bianchi; Production Code: 8ACX12, Original Air Date: 01.16.2011) | *Livin' On A Prayer* (Season 10, Episode 12, dir. by Pete Michels; Production Code: 9ACX09, Original Air Date: 01.29.2012) | *Space Cadet* (Season 11, Episode 9, dir. by Pete Michels; Production Code: AACX06, Original Air Date: 01.06.2013) | *Bigfat* (Season 11, Episode 17, dir. by Julius Wu; Production Code: AACX15, Original Air Date: 04.14.2013).

68 LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE (USA 1974-1983, Blanche Hanalis, William F. Claxton, Michael Landon et al.; 9 seasons, 204 episodes, 5 specials; NBC).

69 *It's A Trap!* (Season 9, Episode 18, dir. by Peter Shin; Production Codes: 7ACX21/7ACX22, Original Air Date: 05.22.2011) Time Code of cited sequence: 00:54:50-00:55:02.

not have the slightest influence on the subsequent episode's story — it is plainly a silly and misleading game with the audience. On a similar note *SOUTH PARK* chose recently the opposite approach, sticking to its clumsiness-in-making and childish sense of humor by retelling *GAME OF THRONES*⁷⁰, breaking the whole story down to just one topic.

4 times

One wie - ner next to an - o - ther wie - ner.

Wie - ner, Wie - ner *sempre*

Two wie - ners a - long-side yet an - o - ther wie - ner.

Wie - ner par - ty, Wie - ner par - ty,

im. 2 'A Chorus of Wieners' from *A Song Of Ass And Fire*

(00:18:08–00:18:45), transcribed by Peter Motzkus

During the ›Previously on *SOUTH PARK*‹ cold opening at the very beginning of *A Song Of Ass And Fire*⁷¹ one could hear an example of what I meant with ›hy-

70 *GAME OF THRONES* (USA 2011-present, David Benioff and D. B. Weiss; 7+ seasons, 73+ episodes; HBO).

71 *A Song Of Ass And Fire* (Season 17, Episode 8, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1708, Original Air Date).

perbolic overacting: the music makes the action way to serious and blows it up to an overly dramatic play — as it is some plain game played by children. Maria Goeth calls this kind of musical usage ›lofty humor‹⁷², meaning that an actually minor situation is being exaggerated and dramatized by its background music and thus turned into a big event (Goeth 2016, 282pp).⁷³ This corresponds to the point of view explained previously, and established by SOUTH PARK: even though the kids are just playing and having fun they are taking the whole situation utterly seriously. The GAME OF THRONES music by Ramin Djawadi makes the seriousness obvious by employing the ›Chorus of Wieners‹ and thus highlighting the ridiculous contraction to the narrative reality. While the original GAME OF THRONES theme music is being used for the opening sequence of *A Song Of Ass And Fire* the subsequent episode *Titties And Dragons*⁷⁴ features the ›Chorus of Wieners‹ — which has been performed by a male choir in George R. R. Martins house in the earlier episode — as intro music. By that the show finally reveals its real venture on ripping off GAME OF THRONES as it is

72 ›pathetischer Humor: »Nebensächliche, naive oder funktionale Textinhalte werden in ein bombastisch, dramatisch oder pathetisch wirkendes musikalisches Gewand gekleidet. Die sprichwörtliche Mücke wird kunstvoll als Elefant maskiert und bleibt dennoch als Mücke erkennbar.« (Goeth 2016, 283).

73 Comparable FAMILY GUY moments are the fights between Peter Griffin and Ernie, the giant chicken: the rumbling and fighting all over town and the almost entire destruction of it is always underscored by a fully-orchestrated, high-speed, and violence enforcing music in a pretty much standard blockbuster movie manner. The scene itself is funny, because it usually does not belong into a comedy cartoon series. Cf. *Da Boom* (Season 2, Episode 3, dir. by Bob Jaques; Production Code: 2ACX06, Original Air Date: 12.26.1999) | *Blind Ambition* (Season 4, Episode 3, dir. by Chuck Klein; Production Code: 4ACX04, Original Air Date: 04.15.2005) | *No Chris Left Behind* (Season 5, Episode 16, dir. by Pete Michels; Production Code: 5ACX11, Original Air Date: 05.06.2007) | *Internal Affairs* (Season 10, Episode 23, dir. by Julius Wu; Production Code: 9ACX20, Original Air Date: 05.20.2012).

74 *Titties And Dragons* (Season 17, Episode 9, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1709, Original Air Date: 12.04.2013).

just an attempt to retell one of the current major programs on American television.

IV. The (almost) Left-Asides

Left out in this fascicle are musical numbers that are not just woven into an episode but that are the main plot of an episode, such as the numerous appearances of actual and fictional music artists — Homer Simpson himself was part of at least three different bands (e. g. Sadgasm⁷⁵), Bart Simpson once joined the Party Posse⁷⁶, Eric Cartman formed the '90s boyband Fingerbang⁷⁷ and Christian rock band Faith + 1⁷⁸, and each Griffin family member has at least one time been a member of a musical formation.⁷⁹ Furthermore entire musical shows like

75 *That 90's Show* (Season 19, Episode 11, dir. by Mark Kirkland; Production Code: KABF04, Original Air Date: 01.27.2008).

76 *New Kids On The Blecch* (Season 12, Episode 14, dir. by Steven Dean Moore; Production Code: CABF12, Original Air Date: 02.25.2001).

77 *Something You Can Do With Your Finger* (Season 4, Episode 8, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 409, Original Air Date: 07.12.2000).

78 *Christian Rock Hard* (Season 7, Episode 9, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 709, Original Air Date: 10.29.2003).

79 Also unmentioned in this article are characters that actually have a musical background that are a constant topic in numerous episodes; e. g. Lois Griffin who's a pianist and piano teacher, alto saxophonist Lisa Simpson who jammed with Bleeding Gums Murphy and other fictional jazz musicians, and Chef the oversexed African American cook at SOUTH PARK Elementary School who's frequent soul songs attempt to seduce women (cf. Nye 2011, 154p | Boyd/Plamondon 2008, 66).

THE SIMPSONS' *Elementary School Musical*⁸⁰ and *All Singing, All Dancing*⁸¹, SOUTH PARK's *Mr. Hankey's Christmas Classics*⁸² and *Elementary School Musical*⁸³, and FAMILY GUY's *Road to...*-mini-series⁸⁴ in which Brian and Stewie are having different road trips, each accompanied by several duets such as »Awfully Different«, »Road To Rhode Island«, and others. It is worth mentioning that all these *Road to...*-episodes each have another opening sequence that is nothing but close to the original FAMILY GUY intro. While the narrative in such episodes is only used to lead over from one musical number to another the overall story is not relevant for the reception of the music in those episodes. Especially the *Musical*-entitled episodes that are loosely parodying the popular HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL series (USA 2006-2008, Kenny Ortega) are referring to a commonly established special episode narrative which can be found in live

80 *Elementary School Musical* (Season 22, Episode 1, dir. by Mark Kirkland; Production Code: MABF21, Original Air Date: 09.26.2010).

81 *All Singing, All Dancing* (Season 9, Episode 11, dir. by Mark Ervin; Production Code: 5F24, Original Air Date: 01.04.1998).

82 *Mr. Hankey's Christmas Classics* (Season 3, Episode 15, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 315, Original Air Date: 12.01.1999).

83 *Elementary School Musical* (Season 12, Episode 13, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1213, Original Air Date: 11.12.2008).

84 http://familyguy.wikia.com/wiki/%22Road_to%22_mini-series Retrieved on November 4, 2019.

action series like SCRUBS⁸⁵ *My Musical*⁸⁶ or GREY'S ANATOMY'S⁸⁷ *Song Beneath The Song*.⁸⁸ In this particular kind of musical narration songs appear hybridized being both a plot, situation or mood paraphrasing ›recitativo‹ and an action withdrawing ›aria‹. Whilst the ›aria‹ mostly stands besides the action the ›recitativo‹ is always in the action. Every now and then such ›recitativo‹ usage can be seen on SOUTH PARK that occasionally employs music on a diegetic level to create awkward situations for the partaking characters as described in *Insheption* or in the episode *Stanley's Cup*.⁸⁹

Judge: »Yes? Come in.«

Stan Marsh: »Hi, my name is Stan Marsh. I was told to come down here and try to-«

Judge: »Yes! Come on, Mr. Marsh. I've been told all about your case. Impounded bicycle, \$83 owed to the county. Maybe you should get a job.«

Stan Marsh: »I *got* a job, but without my *bike* to do my *paper route*, I can't *make the money!* See?«

85 SCRUBS (USA 2001-2010, Bill Lawrence; 9 seasons, 182 episodes; NBC (2001-2008), ABC (2009-2010)).

86 *My Musical* (Season 6, Episode 6, dir. by Will Mackenzie; Production Code: 607, Original Air Date: 01.18.2007).

87 GREY'S ANATOMY (USA 2005-present, Shonda Rhimes; 11+ seasons, 241+ episodes; ABC).

88 *Song Beneath The Song* (Season 7, Episode 18, dir. by Shonda Rhimes; Original Air Date: 03.31.2011).

89 *Stanley's Cup* (Season 10, Episode 14, dir. by Trey Parker; Production Code: 1014, Original Air Date: 11.15.2006).

Judge: *[pulls out a pre-loaded record player and puts the needle onto the record, which begins playing, then says]*

»Stan Marsh is a bright young man. He's got a great family, a promising paper route; only problem is, *[removes the needle from the record]* his bike's been impounded! *[puts the needle back on the record, on another song]* But now, he's about to find out that getting his bike back isn't so easy.« *[pulls the needle off again and puts the needle's arm in its resting place]*

Stan Marsh: *[several seconds later]*

»Look, I really need my bike.«⁹⁰
(00:01:36-00:02:21)

This and its comparative scenes throughout the episode shows the narrative ability and descriptive power music has. The judge knows how to spotlight his words by always carrying a record player with him, so he could emphasize the message he's sending. A message for which he apparently always got the right music to set the mood, whether it is the movie trailer-like motivational rock music of the above mentioned scene or the emphatic, doleful piece to match Stan's mood after visiting a 5-year-old cancer patient of his Park County Pee Wee Hockey Team at the hospital. Absurdity and audacity of musical usage are the keywords to describe SOUTH PARK's music setting in general.

Furthermore left aside in this fascicle are two musical customs that haven't been addressed properly in academic research as of yet. The one is the actual

90 http://southpark.wikia.com/wiki/Stanley%27s_Cup/Script Retrieved on November 4, 2019.

background music, the other is the End Credits music. Sean Nye's article on SOUTH PARK's musical endeavors considers the background and cue music »provided by Adam Berry ([...] Seasons 1-4) and Mad City Productions (Seasons 5-11)« as an integral part of the show with the »3-5-second-long variations of mandolin and guitar twangs« being of »utmost importance«, comparable with sitcom convention of the 1990s that »use[d] music sparingly [...] to get the viewer into the show more quickly« (Rodman 2010, 263) as SEINFELD did with its electric bass riffs (Nye 2011, 148p). The marking of the rural and small town landscape is being musicalized by those short cues at the beginning of each SOUTH PARK episode. The same happens in FAMILY GUY. Almost every episode begins at the Griffin family's yellow painted house and an opening cue that is comparable with the SOUTH PARK »twangs«, with the only difference that FAMILY GUY makes use of an orchestral cue that is even more comparable with the almost stereotypical family friendly sitcom music of the 1980s MacFarlane so frequently refers to. In order to highlight the »special ability« of FAMILY GUY's characters to break the fourth wall and make clear that they're aware of the fact that they're in a cartoon, the main character Peter Griffin makes use of a typical 1980s musical formation to underscore the supposedly heart-warming encounters with his (step)father Francis in *Holy Crap*⁹¹.

Peter Griffin: »I want us to have some of those father-son-moments like on tv, you know, when we hug and the music goes 'la la la'.«

91 *Holy Crap* (Season 2, Episode 2, dir. by Neil Affleck; Production Code: 1ACX11, Original Air Date: 09.30.1999).

[Camera moves to the side. Behind Peter there is a music combo consisting of keyboard, drum-set, alto saxophone, trombone and double bass that plays

Peter's aforementioned 'la la la'.]

»Thanks boys, just like that.«
(00:01:42-00:01:51)

Generally the closing End Credits of a feature film or a tv series receives no further attention in film and/or film music studies. Due to the fact that it mostly simply tries to recapture the contents of the filmic or serial narration and thus leaves the viewers alone with their own summary and evaluation of the plot. Whereas movie conventions are to put the main musical events into a suite-ish medley (i. e. John Williams et al.) the contemporary adult animation series plays around with those conventions in its own way, and eventually establishes new conventions: THE SIMPSONS and FAMILY GUY pioneered in re-arranging its title sequence music for the End Credits music mostly by referring to musical and cultural fashions that have been part of the episode's plot. This can be heard in episodes like *Mr. Saturday Knight*⁹² in which Peter Griffin follows his dream to become a jousting knight at a Renaissance Fair. The theme song is clearly inspired by the Medieval or Renaissance ambience of the episode. Similar ›lingering sounds‹ have been used in the episode *Take My Wife*⁹³ which took place in a private resort in the Bahamas. The theme, which has already been functional-

92 *Mr. Saturday Knight* (Season 3, Episode 9, dir. by Michael Dante DiMartino; Production Code: 3ACX04, Original Air Date: 09.05.2001).

93 *Take My Wife* (Season 13, Episode 18, dir. by John Holmquist; Production Code: CACX14, Original Air Date: 05.17.2015).

ized as background music, is set in a cuban jazz and caribbean reggae kind of style that clearly functions as an indicator for the scene. While in the End Credits it is supposed to enable the audience to reminisce about the plot. The End Credits music speaks directly to the audience's memory and tries to leave it with a final smile or at least a slight chuckle. Therefore it is an important part of the overall narration and thus the backbone of the cartoon.

V. Conclusion

It is a genre in which rapid tempo changes,
unusual instrumental effects, experimental percussion,
postmodern quotation, shock chords,
and musical genre-shifting are de rigeur.
(Strauss 2002, 5)

To finish my paper I would like to state one of the most obvious examples on music's dramaturgy and use in adult animation series: THE ITCHY & SCRATCHY SHOW, the popular cartoon series the Simpson kids love the most. With this »ultraviolet cartoon within a cartoon that suggests Tom and Jerry as directed by John Carpenter« (Friedwald 2002, 258) the SIMPSONS' creators are operating with the well-known 1930-50s cartoons roughly resorting to Hanna-Barbera's multiple Academy Award-winning series of TOM & JERRY⁹⁴ and their

94 TOM & JERRY the original series (USA 1940-1957, Joseph Hanna, William Barbera; 114 short films; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) Not mentioned are the renditions, spin-offs and features throughout 1961-1982 or its many past-SIMPSONS successors (1990-1994, 2001-2008, et al.).

ingenious composer Scott Bradley, who's music Neil Strauss supposedly had in mind when he tried to sum up the multistylistical and -dimensional assets of cartoon, respectively animation music. Bradley's »tense clusters of harmony [...] and rapid melodic lines to focus the viewer's attention on each distinct movement a character made« (Goldmark/Taylor 2002, 116) found a worthy epigone in Alf Clausen. As he is describing his own method of writing music for cartoons Scott Bradley always kept trying to

maintain a continuous melodic line, and follow the action with new harmonization and orchestration of conventional patterns. This sometimes leads to very harsh dissonances, but remember, we are trying to make it funny, and music can't be both funny and beautiful (Ibid., 117),

one could imagine the importance music in animation programs have had and might still have, especially in such taciturn series as TOM & JERRY or its epigonal ITCHY & SCRATCHY SHOW. Wanting to stop »all that senseless violence« in *Krusty Gets Busted* mother Marge files a complaint against the show's creator, Roger Mayer Jr. Her obvious success can be seen and heard in the nonviolent ITCHY & SCRATCHY episode *Porch Pals*: deprived of its main plot — the chasing and killing, the »fighting and biting« — the show ceases to exist in its overall composition, which means the loss of music, the apparent ›backbone‹ (Maltin) of THE ITCHY & SCRATCHY SHOW. Of course THE ITCHY & SCRATCHY SHOW does not account for the contemporary landscape of American animated television programs. Neither of the many techniques and utilizations of music mentioned in my short and delineate fascicle can be witnessed in

the show that tries to keep alive the cartoons from the golden Hollywood studio-era. That is why I had to open with the musical conventions established and exploited by Disney & Co, such as jazz music being still the keen musical aesthetic in cartoon and animation history since the early Disney-Stalling cooperations (cf. Jahn 2016, 207). But with the upcoming of television the theatrical animation adapted televisional production processes, which caused serious artificial developments. Groening, Parker & Stone, and MacFarlane undoubtedly made huge alterations to the cartoon landscape and established, each series for itself, new ways of musical usage and dramaturgy. Music recaptured its ›backbone quality‹ especially within these three adult animation series. One of the major causes might be found in the shows' creators themselves: Seth MacFarlane, himself being a versatile musician and singer, regularly takes on the role as voice actor of at least four main characters (Peter, Brian, and Stewie Griffin, Glenn Quagmire) and performs the major share of original and preexistent songs on the show. His artistic influence on the musical outcome of FAMILY GUY is comparable to the Parker-Stone duo of SOUTH PARK. Both creators have a past as performing artists while founding the fun-punk band DVDA back in the 1990s, when they also co-wrote the mock musical CANNIBAL! THE MUSICAL in 1993 (Nye 2011, 145). As I opened the second part of this article with the assumption that — compared to their different musical approaches — THE SIMPSONS, SOUTH PARK, and FAMILY GUY might not have a lot to do with each other I would like to mention Maria Goeth's theory of ›pathetischer Humor‹ (›lofty humor‹) once again. I think that this categorization of musical humor is one of the main, if not the main dramaturgical operation in contemporary adult animation programs. The over-exaggerated use of ›high end‹ music in

trivial, ›low end‹ scenes would be one of the common ways of musical storytelling in American animated television of the 21st century.

Already at the beginning of this century Daniel Goldmark and Yuval Taylor demanded that the silliest of all musical genres finally be taken seriously. After more than 70 years of television animation it is about time, as they say (cf. Goldmark/Taylor 2002, xvi). Therefore this paper encourages further musicological research regarding the constantly developing field of adult animation programming.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

Motzkus, Peter: SIMPSONS, Inc. (!?) — A Very Short Fascicle on Music's Dramaturgy and Use in Adult Animation Series. In: *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung* 15 (2020), S. 65–114, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59056/kbzf.2020.15.p65-114>.

Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung (ISSN 1866-4768)

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