



THE DUCHESS

Rachel Portman (2008)



POINTS OF INTEREST:

- How the score reflects the period the film is set in: late 18th century
- Underscoring techniques
- How emotion and tension are built
- Restrained and non-virtuosic writing
- Development of ideas

THE DUCHESS - 'THE DUCHESS AND END TITLES', 'MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE', 'SIX YEARS LATER' AND 'NEVER SEE YOUR CHILDREN AGAIN'

STRUCTURE:

- Structures are based around ideas with clear, balanced phrasing.

HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Short cues do not allow for, or require, modulation to sustain interest
- Modes and modally inflected keys
- Minor keys for darker scenes.
- Tonal harmony, but modal passages= non-functional harmony.
- Little or no use of conventional cadence progressions
- Limited number of chords used in all cues.
- Dissonance in darker cues
- Some augmented chords
- Rare minor sevenths
- Harmonic sequence

CONTEXT:

- Portman: Oscar winning composer for original score in period drama 'Emma'
- First female composer to win in this category (Best Original Score).
- Has composed music for over 100 films, eg. Chocolat and the Cider House Rules
- The Duchess: Based on controversial life of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire.
- Film is set in the late 18th century and includes Portman's music, as well as movements from composers Beethoven and Haydn.

RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- 'The Duchess' and 'End Titles'
Regular, clear pulse in 4/4.
Quaver ostinato used extensively.
- 'Mistake of Your Life'
Slow Simple Triple time
Starts off slow moving with unclear pulse. Clear pulse from bar 19 onwards.
- 'Six Years Later'
Compound Duple time
Lively rhythmic feel.
'oom-cha-cha' accompaniment.
- 'Never See Your Children Again'
Slow, gentle, Simple Triple time
'Rocking quavers'

MELODY:

- Melodies mostly built from 2,4 and 8 bar units. Clear, balanced phrasing.
- Each piece based on different ideas.
- Main idea revolves around auxiliary figure.
- Triadic ideas often used.
- Use of sequence

SONORITY:

- Limited orchestral palette, reflecting Classical period
Woodwind, horns and trumpet, timpani, piano, strings, and harp.
- String dominated melodies
- Con arco and pizzicato strings.
- Harp used as accompaniment instrument, playing arpeggios and quaver figures.
- Piano plays plaintive melody in 'Mistake of your life'
- Timpani used for ostinato
- Horns and woodwind provide harmonic filling and doubling.
- Writing is restrained and non-virtuosic: Avoids extremes of range and dynamics

TEXTURE:

- Mainly homophonic textures, supporting the melody.
- Ostinato textures
- Pedal textures