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## Music in the Apu trilogy

Tomás Francisco RODRÍGUEZ MUÑOZ

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1<sup>st</sup> year: *Conservatorio GB Martini Bologna – Italy*

2<sup>nd</sup> year: *Université de Montréal – Canada*

**Name of the supervisor:** *Stefano Zenni*

**Institution:** *Conservatorio GB Martini Bologna – Italy*

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Presented by

**Tomás Francisco Rodríguez Muñoz**

Has been assessed by a jury formed by

President-rapporteur: **Pierre Michaud**

Research director: **François-Xavier Dupas**

Codirector: **Stefano Zenni**

Jury member: **Francis Perron**



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NOTE: This work contained multiple pictures that I consider important for an in-depth understanding of the text. The pictures had to be removed in this copy of the thesis due to Université de Montréal's copyright policies, but they can still be found in the original version.



## **Abstract / Résumé**

The Apu trilogy was inspired by some ideas from Italian neorealism and expanded them to create a genuinely new way of making films. It quickly became a landmark in Bengali culture and influenced artists all over the world, from Scorsese and Saura to The Beatles. Its humanism makes it unlikely for someone to be left indifferent after watching the trilogy and the music written by Ravi Shankar for it plays a key role in this. This work analyses the music of the three films, cue by cue, and describes how the scenes and soundtrack work together to convey a wide range of emotions to the viewer. To the Western audience (which is also inevitably the point of view through which this thesis is written), the music immediately stands out when watching these films for taking a very distinctive approach to the way it makes the viewer perceive the events happening on the screen. This study breaks down Ray and Shankar's monumental work to figure out why that is the case.

*La trilogie d'Apu a été inspirée par quelques idées du néoréalisme italien, et les a développées pour créer une façon novatrice de faire du cinéma. Elle a vite fait date dans la culture bengali et a influencé des artistes du monde entier, de Scorsese à Saura en passant par les Beatles. Il se dégage de cette œuvre un tel humanisme qu'il est difficile d'y rester indifférent, et sa musique, écrite par Ravi Shankar, joue un rôle clé dans cette impression. Ce travail analyse la musique des trois films, scène par scène, et décrit comment l'image et la bande sonore travaillent de concert pour transmettre une large gamme d'émotions au spectateur. Pour le public occidental (qui est aussi, inévitablement, le point de vue de ce mémoire), la musique se démarque dès le premier visionnement, car elle emprunte des chemins inédits pour colorer les émotions et événements présents à l'écran. Cette étude décompose le travail monumental de Ray et Shankar pour mieux comprendre ces interactions.*

## **Keywords / Mots-clé**

Soundtrack analysis, Apu trilogy, Hindustani music, raga, Bengali cinema, Ravi Shankar, Satyajit Ray

Analyse bande son, trilogie d'Apu, musique hindoustanie, rāga, cinéma bengali, Ravi Shankar, Satyajit Ray

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## Introduction: Satyajit Ray and Ravi Shankar

This master's thesis analyses the music in the Apu trilogy. The films that make up the trilogy are *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (1959). The three films were directed by Satyajit Ray and the music for them was written by Ravi Shankar. The trilogy portrays the life of Apu, from his infancy and upbringing in rural Bengal to his adulthood in Calcutta, where he strives to become a writer.

Satyajit Ray and Ravi Shankar got to meet for the first time in 1944. From that moment, they developed a friendly relationship and would meet from time to time whenever Shankar came to perform in Calcutta, city where Ray was living.

In 1950, Ray got the opportunity to watch in London Vittorio de Sica's *Ladri di biciclette*, which deeply inspired him and made him realise that a masterpiece could be created with a low budget.

In 1951, Ray did a sketchbook with a documentary film about Shankar in mind, containing many drawings in watercolour and ink that included multiple depictions of Shankar playing the sitar with a wide range of moods and expressions. The sketchbook also contained notes about the shooting of the film. Ray had always been passionate about music and he intended to get help from Shankar to potentially develop this sketchbook into a series of short films about ragas.

Ragas in Indian classical music (as well as in Bangladesh and Pakistan) can be compared to modes and scales in Western music. A raga determines the set of notes that is going to be used throughout a musical piece, both for written and improvised sections. A raga also comes with distinctive melodic turns and emphasis of specific notes within the scale. There are hundreds of different ragas in use and they are often classified by mood and the time of the day and season of the year in which they should be played.

Neither the documentary nor any of the short films were ever made in the end, but the drawings did catch Shankar's attention. By the early 50s, Shankar was already

considered a prominent figure in classical music in India, while Ray hadn't started his career in film yet.

Some time passed and Ray started conceiving the story and development of what would become the Apu trilogy, based on two Bengali novels by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. Eventually, as the shooting of the first film, *Pather Panchali*, was coming to an end, Ray thought that Shankar would be a good candidate to write the music for the film. He admired Shankar's sitar playing and compositions for the stage and they knew each other well already.

In 1954, when Shankar was living in Delhi, Ray proposed him to write the music for the film. Shankar felt that the subject of the film was emotionally close to him, as he saw the reflection of some of the tragic events in the plot in his own childhood. He accepted the proposal.

The process of making this first film ended up becoming quite challenging for Ray, due to his lack of experience and several funding problems he ran into at several points during the production.

Shankar was often touring with a tight schedule as a successful musician, and that, combined with Ray's deadline if he wanted to present the film in the Indian art festival programmed in the Museum of Modern Art in New York for April 1955, left them with just one night together in Calcutta to work on the score in early 1955. Given the short time that they had together to create the soundtrack, they had to follow an unconventional process. They only had one studio session that started in the evening and lasted until early morning.

There are some elements we can often see in Shankar's approach to film music throughout his career: the predominant use of classical Indian instruments and forms and his preference for incidental music over songs (this is common practice in Western film music, but not at all in India). We can clearly see this in *Pather Panchali*. Shankar decided to only use a small ensemble of a few Indian instruments for the soundtrack.

When Ray and Shankar met to begin with the work, Shankar already had an idea for the main musical theme of the film. A theme with a folkloric and elegant character that surprised Ray for how well he thought it would fit the film.

They didn't have the time to carefully go through each scene deciding where to put music. They just had a partial screening of the film in the afternoon (during which Shankar felt profoundly moved by it). From there, and with some indications given by Ray, they started working.

Another musician had a key role during this recording session, Alope Dey, who played the flute parts and who was responsible for selecting and bringing the rest of the musicians. In the studio, Shankar would play around and improvise with different ideas, while Dey would quickly write down some scores in Indian notation for the other musicians to follow.

A few important music cues were written in a more conventional and careful way, but for the most part they just recorded multiple pieces that would follow the moods and tempi of the scenes. The pieces were normally longer than required to provide some flexibility in the editing process afterwards, where Ray had to take care of choosing what to include in the film from all the material they had recorded.

In the end, both Ray and Shankar ended up being very satisfied with the outcome of the studio session.

The film was very positively welcomed in its premiere in the festival at MoMA. When it was later premiered in India, the audience also received it with fascination, they saw it as the beginning of a new way of making films. Ray's films was breaking the paradigms that had become the norm until then in Indian filmmaking, he created something new. *Pather Panchali* won the award for "Best Human Document" in Cannes in 1956. It was then released in London in 1957 and in New York in 1958. The film became internationally recognised as one of the biggest artistic achievements in Indian cinema.

When Ray and Shankar worked together in 1956 in *Aparajito*, they had to follow a similarly rushed process. This time Ray was less satisfied with the result, as he thought

that they didn't get to record enough material for the film and that some scenes were not working the way he wanted them to because of the lack of music.

In *Apur Sansar* they had more time and they could craft more carefully the music during three full studio sessions. This film is more varied in terms of settings than the previous two and it is the only one in the trilogy to use Western instruments, such as strings and piano. The tone of the music also shifts towards a more mature and serious sound, following the development of Apu's character, who is now an adult.

*Apur Sansar* was however the last film they worked together on. Shankar actually preferred working following the rushed method that we've described, as he thought that he achieved the best results when spontaneously making music like this. Ray's artistic approach was different, more meticulous, and this clash made it difficult for them to be able to work together.

After trying working with a few different composers, from 1961 Ray decided to start writing the music for his films himself instead. Music had been one of his biggest passions since his youth and he had quite an extensive knowledge of both European and Indian music. His musical style would often blend elements from both traditions, as well as combining classical and popular styles.

This made Shankar feel a sense rejection from Ray, a lack of appreciation for his film music. They grew distant from each other and their relationship became slightly tense from then on.

Shankar also often felt frustrated and uneasy about working in the Indian film industry: late changes in the editing that would negatively affect his work on the soundtrack, films not being finished due to financial problems, shallowness of many projects that reached the mainstream... That dissatisfaction made him start preferring to work in international productions instead.

Despite their creative differences and the frictions that those differences created in their friendship, Shankar remained an admirer of Ray's artistic output and they both respected each other's work. When Ray passed away in 1992, Shankar wrote a musical

piece dedicated to him, *Farewell, my friend*. The main theme of *Pather Panchali* is used in the composition. *Pather Panchali* also remained among Shankar's favourite films.

## Cue by cue analysis: Preface

For each music cue the first paragraph describes the scene, the second one describes the music and the third one describes the interaction between the scene and the music.

The version of the film used for timecodes is the 4K restoration, made by the Academy Film Archive for the Criterion Collection. The restoration took place at L'Immagine Ritrovata, in Bologna.

Asterisks in the cue sheet are used to mark diegetic music. When the asterisk is between parenthesis, the cue is an hybrid between diegetic and non-diegetic. This is often the case in *Apur Sansar*. In that film, the music from many cues seamlessly transitions from being diegetic to non-diegetic and vice versa.

Each of the three films has their own recurring main theme. The theme from *Pather Panchali* does appear in the other films. Other than those three main themes, there are multiple music cues throughout the trilogy that resemble each other. Indian music relies heavily on improvisation and that was also the case in the composition of the soundtrack of these films. Several variations of a same musical idea are used in different music cues. This, along with the small instrumental ensemble being used and the repetition of harmonic patterns, helps to create a sense of organic unity throughout the music of the three films, as well as simplifying to some extent the work for Ravi Shankar. In the section of this thesis, in which the different music cues are described, some of these resemblances are noted. However, the approach to the composition of the music for these films does not often follow the frequently used technique of leitmotifs. Therefore, it doesn't make sense to go into much detail about the thematic aspect of the music.

Not being trained in Indian music myself, there are two elements in the music cues analysis that require some clarification. The first one is about the specific instruments being used each cue. I followed some general notes about the instrumentation that can be found in different places in the provided bibliography, these notes are however

contradictory depending on the source. The second one is the ragas being used. The system of scales used in Indian music is very rich and complex, and learning to differentiate between the multiple ragas that they use would require a lot of specialised training; that's why I didn't mention anything about them in the analysis. When the English translation of the screenplay was published in the 80s, Ray mentioned some of the ragas used by Shankar: raga Desh in the bugs dance before the monsoon, raga Todi after Durga's death, raga Patdeep for the tar shehnai's lamentation when Harihar returns home after Durga has passed away, raga Jog with the pigeons shot when Harihar dies, raga Jog when Sarbajaya feels lonely in the village and raga Lachari Todi to represent Apu's relationship with Aparna.

## Pather Panchali: table with narrative timeline and music cues

<b>Pather Panchali timeline</b>		
Time	Schematic narrative blocks	Music cues
0:00:00	0:00:20	Cue 1 0:00:20 - 0:02:35
	Credits	
	0:02:35	Cue 2 0:02:58 - 0:03:17
	Presentation of Durga, Sarbajaya (Durga's mother), Indir (the elderly aunt) and the village, located in rural Bengal.	Cue 3 0:03:49 - 0:05:34
	After a discussion with Sarbajaya over Durga's behaviour, Indir leaves the house for some time. Durga often steals fruits from the neighbour's orchard to bring them to Indir.	Cue 4 0:07:04 - 0:08:07
		Cue 5 0:09:01 - 0:09:47
		Cue 6 0:10:27 - 0:13:14
	0:13:14	
	Presentation of Harihar (Durga's father). He's a priest constantly struggling with bringing money home. He dreams of becoming a successful writer.	Cue 7 0:14:29 - 0:15:56
0:15:00		Cue 8* 0:15:52 - 0:16:42
	Indir returns home, in time to see Durga's newborn brother, Apu.	
		Cue 9 0:19:16 - 0:20:20
	0:20:20	
	Several years have passed, Apu is now a kid and starts going to school and following the teachings of his father.	Cue 10 0:21:36 - 0:22:58
	Durga is accused of stealing a necklace by one of the neighbours. Sarbajaya is blamed for the upbringing of her daughter. Sarbajaya makes Durga stay outside the house for some hours as punishment.	
	Poverty is making the situation in the house increasingly tense. In a moment of despair, Sarbajaya tells Indir that they don't have the means to take care of her anymore. Indir leaves the house once again.	
0:30:00		Cue 11 0:34:20 - 0:35:38
		Cue 12 0:37:21 - 0:38:10



0:45:00		
		Cue 13 0:46:39 - 0:47:28
		Cue 14 0:48:58 - 0:49:16
		Cue 15* 0:54:30 - 0:57:00
		Cue 16 0:57:03 - 0:58:26
1:00:00		Cue 17 1:02:35 - 1:03:53
	1:03:53	Cue 18* 1:03:53 - 1:04:47
	Apu attends a theatre performance, event that would probably influence his pursuit of a career in literature in the future.	Cue 19* 1:04:47 - 1:07:53
	Indir comes back, saying she's not feeling well. Sarbajaya is reluctant to take her in.	Cue 20 1:08:20 - 1:08:53
	Durga and Apu get to see a train for the first time. When they return home, Indir has passed away.	Cue 21 1:09:43 - 1:10:23
		Cue 22 1:12:50 - 1:14:17
		Cue 23(*) 1:14:20 - 1:15:40
1:15:00		
		Cue 24 1:18:25 - 1:19:01
		Cue 25 1:19:28 - 1:20:15
		Cue 26 1:20:56 - 1:22:16
	1:22:16	
	Harihar leaves the village for some time, hoping to earn money to bring back to his family. Sarbajaya is alone with the children. Harihar is gone for several months and Sarbajaya suffers from the lack of news from him. After he finally announces he'll be back soon with some money, Sarbajaya feels relieved.	Cue 27 1:27:05 - 1:29:20
	A big storm begins while Durga and Apu are outdoors. They make it back to the house, but Durga falls sick. The storm returns while Sarbajaya is taking care of Durga at home during the night. The house is destroyed and Durga passes away.	Cue 28* 1:29:20 - 1:31:19
1:30:00		Cue 29 1:31:19 - 1:32:22
		Cue 30 1:32:50 - 1:34:09
		Cue 31 1:34:30 - 1:37:29

		Cue 32 1:38:04 - 1:39:09
		Cue 33 1:39:31 - 1:41:58
		Cue 34 1:42:51 - 1:43:55
1:45:00		
		Cue 35 1:49:52 - 1:53:06
1:50:19		
	Sarbajaya is grieving. Harihar finally returns home and sees what has happened.	
	They decide to leave their ancestral home in the village and move to the city, Benares.	
	Apu finds the necklace Durga had been accused of stealing among her things. He doesn't tell anyone and throws it in the water.	Cue 36 1:56:28 - 1:57:39
2:00:00		
		Cue 37 2:02:11 - 2:02:54
		Cue 38 2:03:34 - 2:05:19
2:05:19		
		Total music time: 0:53:50

## **Pather Panchali: analysis**

CUE 1: The film begins with the credits, handwritten on aged paper.

The piece begins with a pakhawaj (two-head drum, normally played with the hands) introduction. The sitar presents a simple melody, ornamented with repeated notes. The percussion stops as the sitar starts accompanying the flute, which introduces the main musical theme of the film.

The music in the credits is giving us some information in advance about what the tone of the film is going to be. This is analogous of the role overtures often play in operas. The first part has a lively, almost festive character to it. The melody seems to evoke the sound of a traditional or folkloric song, which introduces the rural setting of the film before we even get to see the first scene. In the second part the music becomes more meditative and introspective, anticipating the dramatic elements of the film.

CUE 2: We see Durga for the first time. She is taking some fruits from her neighbour's orchard. The neighbour, a wealthy woman, spots her and shouts at her. Durga runs into the forest.

A fast-paced melody played on the sitar.

The music rhythm follows Durga's running.

CUE 3: Durga is running playfully through the forest to return home. Once she arrives, she hides the guava that she took from the neighbour's orchard. She takes three cats from a big pot in the garden and feeds them some milk.

We hear the sitar playing an ornamented version of the main theme.

The character of the music matches the joy and innocence of childhood. It underlines Durga's frisky and slightly naughty personality.

CUE 4: Indir is eating some rice, while Durga looks at her. Indir gets excited when she sees the fruit Durga brought for her. Sarbajaya arrives.

A melody is played on the dilruba (bowed string instrument).

The nature of the melody and the fact that it is played on a solo bowed instrument seem to be suggesting a sense of fragility. It matches Indir's advanced age and her difficulty to move around. The music evokes some melodic turns of the song that Indir would sing later in the film.

CUE 5: Indir is walking around the garden of the house. Sarbajaya starts talking to her about Durga and the fruit.

The same melody from the previous cue is played on the dilruba.

At this point, we already start associating that melody with Indir.

CUE 6: Sarbajaya accuses Indir of stealing from the kitchen. Indir decides to pack up her things and leaves the house. Durga sees her as she's leaving and tries to make her stay, but Indir leaves anyways. Sarbajaya tells Durga to sweep the floor.

A steady rhythm of sleigh bells. Once Indir leaves the house, the music changes to a repeated note tremolo on the sitar. The repeated notes give way to the main theme, also ornamented with tremolos.

The jingling of the sleigh bells accompanies very effectively Indir's pace. Perhaps the choice of instrument matching the scene and the movements of an old woman so well is due to the fact that the timbre of the sleigh bells could make us think of the sound produced by jewellery or other metallic ornaments. When the sitar starts playing the repeated note, a degree of tension is added to the scene. As the main theme is introduced, the tension disappears progressively. It's as if the music is now hinting that Durga is not quite realising what's happening. A reminder of a kid's innocence.

CUE 7: Indir returns to the house because she heard about the birth of Apu. She walks in accompanied by Durga, who looks very happy about her return.

The sitar plays a more distant variation of the main theme, very cheerful in character.

The music accentuates the joy of the scene.

CUE 8: Indir is rocking Apu's crib. Durga is counting beads and putting them in a box. Sarbajaya is cooking while talking to Harihar.

Indir is singing a lullaby to put Apu to sleep.

First scene in the movie with diegetic music.

CUE 9: Sarbajaya and Harihar are having an optimistic conversation in the kitchen about the future. Durga is sitting on Harihar's lap. Indir is still outside with Apu.

The main theme subtly appears on the sitar. Then it becomes more present as it starts playing on the flute. The theme is played again on the sitar to close the scene.

The warmth and familiarity of the main theme underline the sense of homely family unity in this scene.

CUE 10: Durga wakes Apu up. We get to properly see him as a character for the first time. Sarbajaya and Durga start getting him ready to go to school, maybe for the first time. Durga walks with him to class.

We hear a new theme on the sitar as Apu wakes up. When they start walking to school, the main theme returns on the flute.

The new theme is both playful and serious in character. It follows Apu's excitement, while also giving the introduction of Apu's character the importance it deserves as the protagonist of the trilogy.

CUE 11: Apu, Durga and a dog run behind the candy man through the forest until they arrive at Durga's friend house. Apu and Durga didn't have money and they couldn't buy any candy, so Durga is expecting her friend to share some with them.

An agile and lively melody is introduced on the sitar, accompanied by the pakhawaj. We hear the characteristic resonant gliding sounds of this percussion instrument.

The candy man is a character external to the main story. As such, it is fitting that he's represented by a distinctive new theme. In fact, he will briefly reappear much later in

the film and that's the only other time in which we get to hear this music again. It wasn't Shankar, but Ray's cameraman Subrata Mitra, who wrote the music for this cue.

CUE 12: Durga and Apu are guiding an ox through the countryside and bringing it back home. Sarbajaya and Indir pray in the garden.

The main theme plays on the flute. While Sarbajaya and Indir pray, we hear some seemingly out of tune sustained notes.

The main theme is once more creating a warm feeling as the two siblings get to spend time together. The notes that play while Sarbajaya and Indir pray are slightly disturbing and unclear in purpose. Maybe they represent the sustained conflict between the two characters.

CUE 13: After the neighbour came to blame Durga for stealing a necklace, Sarbajaya grabs her daughter by the hair to take her out of the house. Indir tries to intervene impotently. Apu is also watching. Once Durga is left outside, both her and her mother cry at both sides of the door.

A fast paced rhythm played on the pakhawaj.

The percussive ostinato and the removal of sounds other than the music from the scene convey the dramatic and tense nature of the scene.

CUE 14: Sarbajaya tells Apu to go tell Durga she can return to the house.

Short musical fragment played on the sitar.

This simple music cue emphasises Apu's joy about Durga's punishment being over.

CUE 15: Sarbajaya and Harihar are having a conversation. Sarbajaya is proposing Harihar to leave the village and move to Benares. She doesn't like the life they are living there. We then see Indir outside. It's night-time and she's singing a song. It's a song about having no money.

Indir is singing a song outside. The song has a similar melody to the one played on the dilruba in cues 4 and 5.

During the first part of the scene we cannot undoubtedly locate the source of the music, but Indir's voice is familiar enough to make us think she's the one singing from another part of the house. In the second part of the scene we see that it's her indeed the one who's singing outside. Both the conversation between Sarbajaya and Harihar and the lyrics of the song talk about poverty, a recurrent topic in the trilogy.

CUE 16: Apu, Durga and her friends are making a fire to cook. They are having a picnic in the forest. Indir is walking around, excited about her new shawl.

The sitar plays around the main theme for the duration of the scene.

Similarly to what happened in cue 12, Durga and Apu are bonding and spending time together (this time with other friends as well). It's a lighthearted scene.

CUE 17: After another discussion with Sarbajaya, Indir leaves the house and goes to Raju's to stay for some time. We hear his voice welcoming her, but we never get to see him.

Indir's song melody is played again on the dilruba.

This unique melody keeps accentuating the contrast between Indir's fragile body and her playful personality.

CUE 18: A band comes to the village. The children get to enjoy some food while they watch the percussion performance.

A performance of a couple drums and something that sounds close to a cowbell.

The grave expression of the drummers and the lack of non-percussive instruments seems to be in conflict with the festive character of the scene.

CUE 19: Apu attends a dramatic performance at the theatre.

While the actors are playing their roles, a subtle music plays on the background. This piece is seemingly played by Western instruments. It's the only time in the film when that's the case. The main playing instrument sounds close to a clarinet. When the actors fight, the clarinet is replaced by oboes.

The theatre play seems to be based on mythology. The suggestive music creates a mysterious atmosphere.

CUE 20: Apu took some foil from Durga to make a crown, without asking her. She starts running after him until she catches him.

The music is quite similar to what we heard in cue 2.

Same as in cue 2, the music is accompanying the fast running movements of the children.

CUE 21: Durga mocks Apu and now it's him who runs after her. They run into a field.

The flute plays the main theme, while the sitar accompanies the flute playing a second voice.

The music makes any sense of tension during the chase go away and turns it into something ordinary. It makes the scene be perceived for what it is, two siblings having a small confrontation with no hard feelings.

CUE 22: Indir is exhausted. She drinks some water and cleans her head. She pours the water left in the metal bowl over a plant. Sarbajaya looks slightly concerned, she feels guilty about Indir.

Pedal note tremolo on the sitar. Dynamics undulating in waves.

The repeated note is creating a sense of stillness of old age, it is at the same time also suggesting that something unsettling might be about to happen.

CUE 23: Durga and Apu are on an open field. Durga slowly approaches a big electrical tower in silence, paying close attention to her surroundings. She leans in to hear the sound the tower is producing. Apu is following her, also acting very cautiously. He also leans in to listen to the tower. They seem scared of being in a place where they shouldn't be.

The music in this scene really stands out from the rest of the film. It instantly catches the viewer's attention for being the first time in which the music is really suggesting an



unsettling feeling. The timbre is also very different from everything we've heard up until now. It sounds like a synthesizer emulating some harmonic wind instrument. The same cluster is maintained throughout the scene. The dynamics are also undulating here.

The distinctive timbre and the fact that the characters try to listen to the sound of the tower makes us think that this music is in fact diegetic. It's also worth noting the resemblances between cues 22 and 23, they both use a drone with swells in dynamics. In the scene before cue 22, it was hinted that Indir might be dying soon. By using a somehow similar music in cue 23, which is by the way very close in time to the previous cue, that sense of uneasiness is prolonged.

CUE 24: Durga and Apu are playing and singing on the way home through the forest.

The flute plays the main theme.

The main theme is always very calm in nature, often reflecting a sense of family and home. It helps in momentarily lifting the tension from the previous scenes.

CUE 25: Apu and Durga keep wandering through the forest. They see Indir and approach her thinking she's sleeping. Durga tries to wake her up, only to find out she has passed away.

The sound of sleigh bells that we had associated with Indir in cue 6 returns.

The viewer has probably been suspecting for a while that Indir is going to die soon. The sound of sleigh bells anticipates that moment.

CUE 26: The scene begins with a close up of Indir's face in the forest. We then see a group of men carrying her corpse. Durga and Apu are sitting down in silence, next to the house. Sarbajaya and Harihar are next to the river, also silent.

Throughout the scene we hear Indir singing the same song we had already heard her sing a couple times.

Listening to the song we had already associated with Indir for one last time during her funeral has a strong emotional impact. The song also makes the different scenes in this sequence feel unified around the topic of Indir's death.

CUE 27: The children are sleeping and Sarbajaya is besides them. She then opens a trunk and takes some valuable silverware. In the morning she sells it to buy some rice.

I believe that in this scene we hear the sarod (a fretless plucked string instrument) for the first time. It's playing a slow and nostalgic melody. We hear the glissandos that are so characteristic of this fretless instrument. As the new day begins, the main theme is played on the dilruba.

In the scene right before, we have seen once more Durga's rich and complex personality. Sarbajaya was absorbed in her worried thoughts looking at the letter she had received from Harihar. A beggar, possibly a Samana, approached the house. Only Durga seems to notice the beggar's presence and she walks to him to give him some money. Even if she's the one often having a mischievous behaviour, she's a kind girl. Her character could have been inspired by the picaresque novel. The last third of the film, which began with Indir's death, is arguably the most dramatic. The timbre of the sarod (darker and fuller than the sitar's) and the character of the piece played in this cue accentuate that feeling.

CUE 28: A marching band is playing at the village. Apu is among the crowd listening to it. Some people in the audience are trying to speak to each other, but the loud music makes it difficult. A group of women, including Sarbajaya, is preparing some food meanwhile.

The music of this performance stands out for sounding distinctively Western. It seems out of place in this village.

Ray was reportedly influenced by Italian neorealism when he started his career as a director. The aesthetics of the scene and its slight surrealistic also reminds us of Fellini's *La Strada*, released one year before *Pather Panchali*.

CUE 29: Durga's friend is preparing to get married. In Durga's gaze we can see a pessimistic dreamer attitude. Her friend's family is much wealthier than hers and Durga fears she'll never have the chance to get married like her friend. We then get to briefly see the wedding. The look in Durga's eyes remains the same.

The music of this scene overlaps with the previous one. A solemn melody is played on the tar shehnai (string bowed instrument with a metal horn attached to it). A bit later the pakhawaj enters and the music becomes more festive. During the wedding some female ritual chanting is subtly added.

The music manages to fit both the celebration of the wedding and Durga's nostalgic gaze.

CUE 30: Sarbajaya is desperate about the lack of news from Harihar. She tells her neighbour about it. Out of pride, Sarbajaya refuses her neighbour's help. Then Apu arrives carrying a letter.

We hear the sarod playing a slow melody ornamented with gliding notes again. The notes in the melody are sparser and lower in register than what we heard during cue 28. The the sitar comes in playing a long tremolo that engulfs the sarod.

This sombre piece accentuates how Sarbajaya's hopelessness is increasing towards the end of the film.

CUE 31: Sarbajaya finally receives a letter from Harihar. Her face lightens up as she reads it attentively. We see a water surface, with some plants and insects on it. Then there's a dog and a cat playing together. Sarbajaya is lying on the floor fanning herself. Durga puts on some makeup, draws her bindi and walks outside.

The piece opens with an harp-like texture on the sitar and two notes on the flute. As we see the water, the sitar starts playing the same music from cue number 10, when Apu woke up.

This scene and its music give the audience a break between the previous drama and what's coming next. It's a long scene with barely any narrative content. We get to enjoy

the music while the insects in the scene seemingly dance to it. In this scene, the music actually came before the image. Shankar's composition inspired Ray and gave him this idea of a shot of bugs dancing on the water surface.

CUE 32: Apu is running alone in the countryside. Durga is praying while seeding and watering a plant. We see some landscape shots. There are dark clouds and we can see the wind blowing of plants and trees.

A low drum is playing a steady, fast rhythm. There are some resonances of the sitar in the background.

The images combined with the percussion advance the feeling of a coming storm.

CUE 33: It starts raining while we see a man fishing. He pulls out an umbrella. The rain becomes more intense. Apu seeks refuge under a tree. Durga lets the rain fall on her face. She spends some more time under the rain before joining Apu. She protects Apu with her sari, while reciting a few prayers. Sarbajaya becomes concerned as she realises that the kids are not at home.

The flute plays a new, cheerful melody. The percussion joins in and plays quietly. The sitar replies with a melody similar in character. It then starts stars playing faster and faster, while the sounds of the storm and rain progressively bury it. The character of the music in this last part of the cue reminds us of cues 2 and 20.

The lively character of the music makes us think that Durga and Apu are seeing the rain as something exciting. As the tempo of the music increases and the sound of the storm intensifies, the scene becomes more dramatic.

CUE 34: Durga has fallen sick, she's in bed. She talks with Apu about going to see the train again when she recovers. We see the candy man through the window, followed by a closeup of Durga lifelessly looking straight at the camera.

The cue begins with a few subtle tremolos on the sitar, as Durga is talking to Apu. We then hear the candy man theme once more, the same one from cue 11. The main theme is played on the flute as we she Durga's stare.

The contrast between the candy man's playful music and the sober main theme played on the flute could be representing the duality of life and death. Durga is about to pass away.

CUE 35: The storm has destroyed the house. Sarbajaya is sitting on the floor, with Durga's head resting on her lap. She is dead. Apu brings the neighbour. She hugs and consoles Sarbajaya. Apu is getting ready to go to school. We had previously seen Durga and Sarbajaya help him to get ready, but now he's alone. He's still probably unaware of what has happened. A girl brings Sarbajaya some food sent by her neighbour, but she doesn't seem to be seeing or hearing anything, she's in shock.

The last sombre piece that is played on the sarod. The melody has a slow and dark beginning. It progressively becomes more active while it also goes up in register. The sarod melody is accompanied by the pakhawaj and punctuated by some flute notes.

The most tragic event in *Pather Panchali* happens at the beginning of this cue. The music accompanies the tragedy, while also representing that this is one of many tragic events in the protagonist of the trilogy, Apu.

CUE 36: Harihar returns home. Sarbajaya is not responding to him. He gives her a sari he brought for Durga. Sarbajaya starts crying and Harihar realises his daughter is dead. They both cry and scream in pain. Apu returns home and hears them.

A piercing and disheartening melody is played on the high notes of the tar shehnai. The sitar provides a repeated pedal note.

This scene represents the dramatic climax of the film. Sarbajaya and Harihar are heartbroken after the death of their daughter. Apu's clothing when he is returning home remarkably looks like traveling clothes. Durga's death is the beginning of his journey. It was Ray himself who came up with the idea for the music of this scene. The lamentation played by the tar shehnai conveys Sarbajaya's grief outburst.

CUE 37: Apu finds the necklace Durga had stolen. He removes any evidence by throwing it in the water.

A constantly fast rhythmic pattern on the pakhawaj.

The percussion follows Apu's haste to get rid of the necklace before anyone sees it.

CUE 38: A snake enters the house, now empty. Apu, Sarbajaya and Harihar leave the village on a cart pulled by oxen.

The main theme returns one last time, played by both the sitar and the flute.

The snake entering the house seems to represent the misfortune that has invaded the family. It also gives us the idea that they've left that house for good and wildlife will now slowly start reigning over it. The main theme being played as they depart suggests that the concept of home is not necessarily linked to a specific house. The family is bringing their home with them, as they leave with the determined will of starting a new life somewhere else.

**Aparajito: table with narrative timeline and music cues**

<b>Aparajito timeline</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Schematic narrative blocks</b>	<b>Music cues</b>
0:00:00	0:00:20	Cue 1 0:00:20 - 0:02:50
	Credits	
	0:02:31	
	The family is now living in Benares. Harihar is working as a priest. Apu has made new friends in the city. Sarbajaya keeps taking care of the house and the family.	Cue 2 0:05:23 - 0:06:02
	Harihar falls sick and dies.	
		Cue 3 0:09:30 - 0:10:32
		Cue 4 0:14:28 - 0:15:02
0:15:00		
		Cue 5 0:21:13 - 0:21:48
		Cue 6 0:22:40 - 0:23:55
		Cue 7 0:25:59 - 0:26:14
		Cue 8 0:29:07 - 0:30:04
0:30:00		
		Cue 9 0:31:01 - 0:31:11
		Cue 10 0:31:12 - 0:32:18
	0:35:45	Cue 11 0:35:45 - 0:36:32
	Sarbajaya is unsure about what their next step should be. She decides to move in with Apu's great-uncle, they go back to Bengal.	

	Apu starts his training to become a priest. He also starts attending school and immediately catches his teachers attention with his commitment to his studies.	Cue 12* 0:39:41 - 0:42:00
0:45:00		Cue 13 0:45:34 - 0:46:14
		Cue 14 0:46:49 - 0:47:49
		Cue 15 0:47:56 - 0:48:34
		Cue 16 0:50:21 - 0:50:53
		Cue 17 0:51:32 - 0:52:06
		Cue 18 0:53:36 - 0:53:46
		Cue 19 0:53:47 - 0:55:49
		Cue 20 0:57:28 - 0:57:55
1:00:00		Cue 21 0:59:56 - 1:01:57
	1:01:52	
	Several years have passed and Apu continues excelling as a student. He is offered a scholarship to move ahead with his studies in Calcutta. Sarbajaya gives him permission to go and gives him some money she saved while working in Benares.	Cue 22 1:05:08 - 1:05:45
	In Calcutta Apu attends his lessons, works at a printing house to pay for his rent and makes a new friend.	Cue 23 1:07:05 - 1:09:45
		Cue 24 1:14:46 - 1:15:21
1:15:00		
	1:20:37	
	Apu returns home for the holidays and stays with his mother for a few days. Sarbajaya clearly feels lonely when Apu is away.	Cue 25 1:21:08 - 1:22:27



		Cue 26 1:24:46 - 1:25:56
		Cue 27* 1:25:57 - 1:26:30
		Cue 28 1:29:02 - 1:30:08
1:30:00		Cue 29 1:30:25 - 1:31:06
		Cue 30 1:32:31 - 1:33:22
	1:33:25	Cue 31 1:33:33 - 1:34:40
	Apu is back in Calcutta. His mother worries about him and sends him letters, but he is reluctant about returning home for a visit.	Cue 32 1:35:25 - 1:36:06
		Cue 33 1:36:44 - 1:37:41
	Sarbajaya falls sick and the pain she's feeling from loneliness and sadness makes her becomes slightly delusional.	
	Apu returns home when he receives a letter saying his mother is ill, but by the time he arrives there it's already too late, she has passed away. Apu is now alone in the world.	Cue 34 1:41:00 - 1:42:33
		Cue 35 1:44:59 - 1:45:35
1:45:00	His great-uncle tries to convince him to stay in the village and work as a priest, but he stays determined to continue with his studies in Calcutta.	Cue 36 1:46:17 - 1:46:38
		Cue 37 1:47:26 - 1:48:16
		Cue 38 1:48:18 - 1:49:34
1:49:34		
		Total music time: 0:37:06

## Aparajito: analysis

CUE 1: Beginning credits of the film. Images of a river shot from a moving train on a bridge.

The piece written for the beginning credits starts with a percussion introduction. Then the main music theme of the film is presented. Throughout the credits we will hear different variations and ornamentations of it. Different instruments are introduced as the piece progresses, like the flute, the sitar, the dilruba and a pitched percussion instrument with a very resonant sound.

In the first film, *Pather Panchali*, there was a main music theme that reappeared often throughout the film. This second film, *Aparajito*, has its own main theme and it is introduced in this cue. The theme from *Pather Panchali* will also appear at a few important moments of this film. We could describe this first music cue as very active and busy with a variety of sounds and rhythms. This sets the tone for the first part of the film, which takes place in the hectic city of Benares.

CUE 2: We see Harihar walking on the streets of Benares to return home.

We hear the main theme of the film again, this time played on a solo flute.

During the first part of the film, the character of Harihar is very present. This has probably the intention to give us some more details about him and make us feel closer to him before he passes away. The combination of the images and the calm character of the music give us the impression of sharing a moment of intimacy and warmth with the character, as he is living his daily routine as a priest. It is also worth pointing out that the first section of *Aparajito* is very musical. In the streets of Benares, we often hear singing, melodic declamations, bells, street musicians and celebrations. The line between music and ambient sounds becomes a bit blurred. These sounds, that contribute to create a depiction of the lively city and its contrast with the rural Bengal in which *Pather Panchali* was set, have not been included in the cue sheet.

CUE 3: Apu is playing and running around the streets of the city, with a group of friends. He then arrives home in a haste and drinks some water.

Fast-paced piece with many repeated notes and a steady rhythm played on the sitar.

The pieces matches Apu's joyful energy and playfulness.

CUE 4: Sarbajaya is trying to light a match. It seems do be broken and she doesn't have any more.

Several flutes playing long notes and creating dissonances and acoustic beats between them.

The dark character of the music contrasts with the apparently normal scene. It is possible that the music is trying to highlight the family's poverty.

CUE 5: Harihar invites a fellow priest from the ghat to have tea at his house. In this scene, the guest is walking out of the house.

Solo percussion piece played on the pakhawaj.

Like in the previous cue, the music and the scene are apparently disconnected here. The percussion seems to be conveying a sense of tension, but there doesn't seem to be any in the scene.

CUE 6: The cue opens with some fireworks. We then see Sarbajaya lighting candles on the floor. Harihar arrives home, visibly sick.

Another solo percussion piece. There's an anvil playing along with the pakhawaj. They become buried by other festive sounds present in the scene at several points. The flute then briefly plays a melody, also with a festive character.

The interaction between music and image is interesting in this case. The music reflects the celebrations taking place in the city, outside of the house. However, what we are watching is mostly what's happening indoors, which is a different situation altogether.

CUE 7: Harihar is lying down in bed, sick, talking to Apu. Apu wants to go outside to play with his friend, Harihar lets him go.

Yet another music cue played on drums. The anvil is also present again.

The music keeps establishing the festive atmosphere present in Benares that night.

CUE 8: Harihar collapses while walking up the steps of the ghat. Some people come to help him and take him home.

I believe we have not heard many cues in the trilogy up to this point with such a full and dense texture and dramatic character. We hear a background of bowed string harmonics, plucked repeated notes and also a lower bowed string instrument. Everything with a very chromatic sound. The sarod and sitar start playing some melodies on top of that.

Seeing Harihar collapse while listening to such intense music hints the fact that he might not have much time left.

CUE 9: Sarbajaya buttons up Harihar's shirt while he is lying down in bed, visibly very sick and without any energy left.

Solo melody on the tar shehnai, whose piercing sound brings us back to the dramatic climax at the end of the first film.

Using the tar shehnai here, as a follow-up of the previous cue, emphasises the drama of this moment of the plot.

CUE 10: Apu is watching how some people and oxen take water from a well. The way the scenes follow each other around this cue and the distinctive setting of this scene in particular could give us the impression that we are in Harihar's mind, almost like a prophecy or allegory.

We hear a woman and a kid singing a seemingly popular melody.

This cue begins immediately after the previous one, however, the change of scenery and the change of timbre, make them distinctive enough to be separate cues.. There are many unsettling elements about this scene: the whiteness of it, the close-up of the well stone, the way the kid is singing the melody, the dramatic scenes before and after it...

CUE 11: Harihar dies and we see a flock of birds that start flying abruptly right afterwards. Apu walks along the river with a group of men, probably priests.

A very gestural descending melody is played in the high register of the flute, against a background of string tremolos. We hear another instrument, likely the sarod, playing the same chromatic motive from cue 8.

The music is effectively accompanying the tragedy we just witnessed. We can foresee the horror coming to Apu's and, specially, Sarbajaya's life.

CUE 12: Sarbajaya has started working for a wealthy family following Harihar's death. Apu is taking care of an old man, who's lying down on a rocking chair smoking from a pipe. He gives Apu some money and sends him away. The house is in the countryside and it is very elegant and full of artworks. We then see a group of people in the village playing instruments and singing, they are the source of the music we started hearing at the beginning of the cue. Apu runs across them and goes into a temple, full of monkeys.

Diegetic music played by the group of people we see marching on the street. There are two reed woodwinds followed by a group of singing women.

The music plays a key role in setting the ambience of the village here. The character of the music, which sounds both religious and festive, matches well Apu's visit to the temple.

CUE 13: Sarbajaya and Apu are travelling on the train to go back to Bengal, along with Apu's great-uncle.

The flute and sitar play the main recurring theme of the first film, *Pather Panchali*.

It's the first time we hear this theme in this film. It accompanies and represents their return to Bengal, which is where the first film took place.

CUE 14: Sarbajaya and Apu arrive at their new home in Bengal. Apu is mesmerised watching a train pass by close to the house.

The dilruba subtly plays a variation of the main theme of the film, the one we heard in cues 1 and 2.

The music in this cue, together with Apu's face, highlights both their arrival to the new place and the importance that trains have in the plot of this trilogy (specially in this film). For Sarbajaya the train is going to become a symbol of feeling far away from her son.

CUE 15: An overview of the train in the distance and the village from the roof of one of the houses.

The flute plays a more straight-forward version of the theme from the previous cue.

Again, the music is placing emphasis on the start of a new section of the film, where the family is living in a new place. The peaceful character of the melody and the way it's played match the calm ambience of the village.

CUE 16: Apu says a prayer and then we see him walking in the countryside.

The flute plays a melody over an accompaniment played on the sitar. The music has a carefree character.

Both the scene and the music are very calm, there's no tension in them. Apu's innocent and curious character is brought out.

CUE 17: In the previous scene, Apu had seen a group of kids walking outdoors. They spark his curiosity and he runs to follow them to school.

Same music that we heard in cues 2 and 20 of *Pather Panchali*. A fast-paced melody played on the sitar.

The music follows Apu's excitement and liveliness. This point of the film marks a turning point. From now on, Apu is going to start attending school and he will become very invested in learning and studying.

CUE 18: Apu is lying on Sarbajaya's lap.

A brief melody played on the tar shehnai. This instrument has mostly appeared in dramatic scenes up until now. Here it acquires a more nuanced and peaceful character.

Very intimate scene. Even if short, many elements are represented here: Sarbajaya's unconditional love for his son, Apu's innocence and the family's poverty.

CUE 19: In the short transition between the previous cue and this one, some time has passed (at least several months). We see the headmaster walking around the school and getting ready for the inspector visit.

This music cue is played on the pakhawaj. It has a very steady character, almost mechanical.

The percussive patterns accompany the headmaster's roam around the school.

CUE 20: Apu is reading an extract from a book in front of the inspector.

We hear the main theme from *Pather Panchali* played on the sitar.

It seems fitting to have this theme playing while Apu is reading a text about Bengal. There's a sense of patriotism regarding Bengal throughout the trilogy. It's the home of all the main characters and the filmmaker, Ray, also comes from this region.

CUE 21: The headmaster is describing some books while he gives them to Apu. Then we see Apu excitedly showing some of the things he learned in the books to Sarbajaya.

The flute plays the main theme of *Pather Panchali*.

The music here gives a warmer feeling to the scene.

CUE 22: Sarbajaya and Apu have a discussion over him going to Calcutta to study. Sarbajaya gets frustrated and slaps Apu. Apu leaves and Sarbajaya feels guilty.

Here we hear a music similar to what we heard in cue 8.

It honestly seems a bit out of proportion to have the same dramatic intensity here as when Harihar collapsed on the street before dying. Maybe Indian society sees it differently.

CUE 23: Sarbajaya proudly shows Apu her savings from the time she worked in Benares. Apu gets so excited, he'll be able to go study in Calcutta. Then Apu enthusiastically shows her the globe the headmaster gave him. Then we see Sarbajaya helping him pack to go to the city to begin his studies there. Sarbajaya says goodbye to him and she becomes visibly sad as he leaves.

The cue opens with a sorrowful melody on the tar shehnai. The music shifts tone completely, as the sitar starts playing a cheerful melody. At the end of the cue, the music changes once again and a variation of the main theme of *Pather Panchali* is played on the flute.

Even if their discussion has been left behind by the beginning of the scene, the starting melody on the tar shehnai seems a remembrance of it. When we start hearing the sitar, the mood of the scene changes to reflect Apu's excitement about his new journey. As Apu is leaving, the main theme, which we have often associated with the concept of home, starts playing.

CUE 24: Apu arrives at his new room in Calcutta. He writes a letter to his mom.

The flute plays the main theme of the film.

Both the main theme from *Pather Panchali* and the main theme of this film seem to be often associated with the idea of home and family. The fact that the *Aparajito* theme is played in this scene suggests that Apu's feeling of home will soon reside in Calcutta.

CUE 25: Sarbajaya is organising some things outside the house and she's getting ready for Apu's return. Apu arrives. Sarbajaya looks very expressively content about seeing his son again after a long time.

The dilruba plays around the same melody for the duration of this relatively long cue.

This mellow and unconcerned character of the pieces accompanies well a genuinely happy scene.

CUE 26: Sarbajaya is expressing some of her concerns, while Apu falls asleep.



The music starts with a high-pitched twinkling sound with an almost electronic timbre. The flute plays the descending melody we heard before in cue 11, only this time in a calmer way.

This cue marks the beginning of the last tragic segment of the film. Sarbajaya will gradually fall deeper and deeper into despair from now on, until she eventually passes away.

CUE 27: A kid is performing on the street, displaying his flexibility and physical skills, while a man accompanies his movements with music. There's a crowd of children around the performance. Apu is among them, but he gets bored and leaves quickly.

Diegetic music cue in which we hear a man singing a song while playing a drum. The song speaks about strengthening one's body and skills to then show it to the world.

The music is complementing the kid's feats to create a more entertaining performance.

CUE 28: Sunrise over Bengal. Sarbajaya was supposed to wake up Apu early so he can catch the train to return to Calcutta, but she didn't. Part of her doesn't want to let him go.

The dilruba, the sarod and the flute play together in this melancholic piece.

The piece's relatively dark character shows Sarbajaya's internal conflict.

CUE 29: Apu is getting ready to catch the train to go back to Calcutta. His mother is helping him with packing.

The sitar is playing around with a sombre motive. At the end of the cue the flute comes in, playing with a similar harmony.

Similarly to what happened in the previous piece, the music's tone is emphasising both Apu's annoyance and Sarbajaya's sense of guilt.

CUE 30: Apu missed the train and he returns home. He talks with Sarbajaya for a bit and then falls asleep outside the house.

The dilruba plays the same music from cue 25.

There is something off about this scene. Apu seems unworried and happy, despite having been annoyed by the possibility of missing the train earlier. The music is making this ambiguity even more apparent.

CUE 31: A succession of silent scenes showing different moments of Apu in school as time goes by.

The sitar is repeating variations of a short motive, accompanied by the pakhawaj.

The music links the different scenes together, while also pushing time forward.

CUE 32: Apu is writing a letter to his mother saying he will not return home for Ganesh puja. Then we get a close-up of Sarbajaya's resentful and hopeless expression.

We hear again the ringing high-pitched electronic sound and the flute playing the descending melody.

Apu's and Sarbajaya's relationship is weakening. Sarbajaya is becoming increasingly sad about the distance growing bigger between them. He is everything she has left.

CUE 33: A woman is chatting with Sarbajaya, but her mind is clearly somewhere else. She is barely seeing Apu anymore and she feels lonely. We then see her sitting down with her back against a tree. She has a fever. Nirupama comes to talk to her.

Once more, we hear the music from the previous cue.

As Sarbajaya's suffering intensifies, the music and the film become darker. We are however starting to feel some resignation in her sadness.

CUE 34: Sarbajaya sees a train passing by in the distance, and she gets excited for a moment thinking Apu might be returning home. We can see that she is physically very weak already. She then hears an hallucination of Apu's arriving home.

A lighter version of the music from cues 8 and 22 plays in the background, quite low in the mix. We then hear the descending melody on the flute.

The tone of the music is highlighting Sarbajaya's decline and hinting her death.

CUE 35: Apu returns home, as he receives a letter saying his mother is sick. As he arrives there, he figures she has passed away.

The music played in the previous cue is repeated, once again.

The repetition of music themes throughout these last cues is guiding us towards the tragic conclusion of the film, it's giving us a sense of omen about Sarbajaya's death.

CUE 36: Apu has just found out that his mother died. He cries.

The dilruba plays a sorrowful variation of the main theme of the film, accompanied by some resonances on the sitar.

The music expresses Apu's feeling of loneliness. No one from his family remains alive, he is now alone. The music is also effectively bringing the film to its conclusion.

CUE 37: Apu's great-uncle talks to him, as he is getting ready to return to Calcutta.

Although not technically a music cue, we hear three times the sound of a rolling big boulder that is not present in the scene.

The intention of including this sound here is not clear. It could be representing Apu's strong willpower. He's still determined to keep going on, despite all the tragic events that have happened in his life so far.

CUE 38: Apu leaves the village, he is returning to Calcutta.

A flute plays the main theme of the film, with a delay effect. The melody is richly ornamented. We also hear the boulder roll once more. After the screen has faded to black, the sitar and pakhawaj introduce a sudden change in the character of the music, now celebratory.

This music cue closes the film and an important chapter in Apu's life. It accompanies him as he abandons the family life in Bengal. The character shift in the music suggest that not everything is lost, that he can still manage to carry on despite the continuous tragedy that has followed him since childhood.

## Apur Sansar: table with narrative timeline and music cues

Apur Sansar timeline		
Time	Schematic narrative blocks	Music cues
0:00:00	0:00:21	
	Apu lacks money and quits university	Cue 1 0:01:17 - 0:03:42
	0:01:17	
	Credits	
	0:03:42	
	Apu is struggling with money: he owes several months of rent and he is having a hard time finding a job.	
	He meets his university friend Pulu. Pulu invites him to his cousin's wedding.	Cue 2 0:08:14 - 0:09:09
	Apu also excitedly tells him about the novel he is writing.	Cue 3 0:10:23 - 0:11:05
		Cue 4 0:11:40 - 0:12:10
		Cue 5 0:13:45 - 0:15:10
0:15:00		Cue 6 0:15:49 - 0:16:17
		Cue 7* 0:16:31 - 0:17:14
		Cue 8 0:23:48 - 0:24:45
	0:25:25	Cue 9(*) 0:25:19 - 0:26:00
	Apu and Pulu go to Khulna for the wedding. Just before the celebration, the groom becomes delirious. Pulu asks Apu to become the new groom. Apu accepts.	Cue 10 0:27:16 - 0:28:15
		Cue 11(*) 0:28:45 - 0:31:22
0:30:00		Cue 12 0:31:23 - 0:33:25
		Cue 13 0:34:01 - 0:35:25
		Cue 14 0:36:09 - 0:36:50
		Cue 15(*) 0:37:06 - 0:38:24
		Cue 16(*) 0:38:25 - 0:41:11

		Cue 17 0:41:16 - 0:42:38
	0:43:31	Cue 18 0:43:03 - 0:44:09
0:45:00	Apu and Aparna, now married, return to Calcutta. Aparna comes from a rich family, so Apu feels insecure about the poor lifestyle she's having with him.	Cue 19 0:46:09 - 0:48:46
	Nevertheless, they are happy together and they develop a strong bond.	Cue 20* 0:48:59 - 0:49:12
		Cue 21* 0:51:35 - 0:52:02
		Cue 22 0:53:07 - 0:54:01
		Cue 23 0:56:06 - 0:58:03
		Cue 24 0:58:16 - 0:58:26
		Cue 25* 0:58:26 - 0:59:23
1:00:00		Cue 26 1:00:19 - 1:02:20
	1:02:20	
	Aparna returns with her family for two months. There she passes away during childbirth. Apu loses himself and grieves when he hears the news. He decides to leave Calcutta.	
	While walking in a forest, he throws away the pages of the manuscript of his novel.	Cue 27 1:08:59 - 1:09:49
		Cue 28 1:10:29 - 1:13:05
1:15:00		Cue 29 1:15:44 - 1:16:27
		Cue 30 1:16:47 - 1:17:17
		Cue 31 1:18:10 - 1:20:58
	1:20:58	
	Pulu goes to Khulna, where Apu's five years old son is living with Aparna's father.	Cue 32 1:21:06 - 1:22:39
		Cue 33 1:22:56 - 1:23:12
	Apu is working in a coal mine in Nagpur. Pulu goes	Cue 34 1:23:48 - 1:24:11

	there to talk to him. He doesn't seem to be interested in meeting his own son, he resents him for causing Aparna's death. He is scared, he has suffered too much.	Cue 35 1:25:29 - 1:26:00
1:30:00		Cue 36(*) 1:30:06 - 1:31:37
		Cue 37 1:32:13 - 1:33:27
1:33:51		
	Apu finally recovers some strength and decided to go to Khulna to meet his son, Kajal. He is unsure whether to take him with him or not.	Cue 38(*) 1:35:38 - 1:37:53
	As Apu is leaving the village, Kajal follows him. Father and son will now return to Calcutta and begin a new life together.	Cue 39 1:37:58 - 1:39:29
		Cue 40 1:41:47 - 1:42:17
		Cue 41 1:42:20 - 1:44:34
1:45:42		Cue 42 1:44:35 - 1:45:42
		Total music time: 0:52:49

## **Apur Sansar: analysis**

CUE 1: Contrasting with the previous films, this one doesn't begin with the credits right away; there's a short scene before that provides us with the context of Apu quitting his studies due to not being able to pay for them. The first music cue starts playing when the credits begin.

The dilruba introduces the main theme of the film over the pakhawaj. It's worth noting how the beginning of the theme is quite similar to the beginning of the theme in *Aparajito*. Then, the sitar plays a fast virtuoso passage. It is followed by a fast melody on the dilruba. Lastly, the cue finishes with a melody played on what sounds like a low flute.

Similarly to what happened in the previous two films, the main theme of the film is introduced in the credits. However, the musical fragments that follow it are also highly thematic, but they will not reappear during the film.

CUE 2: Apu is in his apartment in Calcutta, going through his books.

The flute plays the main theme, very ornamented.

In the previous scene we had seen Apu's landlord warning him, as he had been skipping rent payment during the last few months. However, Apu doesn't seem to take him very seriously and his calmness about the topic is reflected in this relaxed scene. The solo flute contributes to that feeling.

CUE 3: Apu is walking on the street, where some kids are playing. He is looking for a job and he enters an elementary school to ask for employment.

A short motive is repeated as an ostinato, played by an ensemble of string instruments. The way the music is mixed, with a fragile shaky sound lacking high frequencies, adds a peculiar character to the sound.

The ostinato accompanies Apu in his search.

CUE 4: Apu keeps looking for job opportunities. He now enters a pharmaceutical plant.

The same music from the previous cue is repeated.

The repetition of the same music adds unity to these two similar scenes.

CUE 5: Apu leaves the pharmaceutical plant, disappointed. He then takes a tram. He rereads the letter he received about his short story being published. Lastly, we see him walking on the train tracks in the afternoon, while a group of pigs walks by. He returns home.

The main theme is played, alternating between the sarod using tremolos and the flute. Then the sitar takes over.

Both the scene and the music instill a warm nostalgic feeling.

CUE 6: Apu is going to bed. His neighbour looks at him through the window, but he hides from her.

Several wind sounds create a dissonant texture.

Both the music and Apu's expressions make us think he's troubled.

CUE 7: Apu is lying down in bed, playing the flute. He gets interrupted by someone knocking on his door.

Very gestural and richly ornamented flute melody.

It's the first time we see Apu playing music, yet he seems quite skilled at it.

CUE 8: Apu gets very excited and expressive, as he tells Pulu what the novel he has started writing is about.

The theme from *Pather Panchali* is played on the flute.

As Pulu points out, the novel has many autobiographical elements. Apu is indirectly talking about some important moments of his childhood and upbringing in Bengal. The theme we hear is at this point in the trilogy very linked to that time and place.



CUE 9: We transition from an evening scene in Calcutta to a bright rural river landscape in the morning. Pulu and Apu are on a boat, on their way to Khulna.

A simple pattern is repeated a few times on the sitar as we crossfade between both scenes. Then, we hear a melody being played on the flute.

The solo flute melody complements well the calmness of the landscape and the flowing of the river. It isn't until the ending of the cue that we find out that Apu's the one playing.

CUE 10: The two friends arrive at Pulu's family house. Apu is received enthusiastically.

Sitar and flute play a distant variation of the main theme.

The atmosphere at the house is festive, preceding the wedding. The music accompanies that character.

CUE 11: The preparations for the wedding start. We see two musicians playing the shehnai. The bride is getting dressed for the ceremony. A marching band plays along the river. Amidst the procession of people, some men are carrying the groom. We see Apu sleeping under a tree, he doesn't wake up as the marching band walks by. There's an alternation of scenes centred around the preparation of the bride and the arrival of the groom. At the end we get a close-up of the demented groom.

As the scenes alternate, so does the music. When we see the bride, we hear a melody on the shehnai accompanied by the pakhawaj. When we see the marching band and the groom, it's the music being played by the band what we hear. They are playing a version of "Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre". However, when we properly see the groom at last, it's the shehnai music that plays.

It's interesting to note how the music is dynamically alternating between being diegetic and non-diegetic in this scene. The contrast between the two musics also contributes to the forward motion of the scene. The complex intertwining of diegetic and non-diegetic music is going to be a recurring element in this film, likely due to the fact that there are plenty of representations of traditional Indian celebrations in the plot of *Apur Sansar*.

CUE 12: We get to see the groom's weird behaviour. It's not completely clear whether he was already crazy or if it was the trip what made him go crazy. The bride's mother refuses to let her daughter marry with him. The concern about the 'auspicious hour' begins. It means that the daughter needs to be married right away to someone else, or she will never get to marry.

The music here is similar to what we heard in *Aparajito*, when Harihar passed out in the ghat of Benares. A low string instrument, which sounds very much like a cello, becomes part of the oppressive musical texture.

The situation that has just been created in this scene marks the start of the main dramatic arch of the film.

CUE 13: Pulu and some other members of the family go to Apu and propose him to become the new groom. He feels outraged by the proposal.

A lighter version of the music from the previous cue is repeated.

Like in the previous cue, the ominous music is suggesting that some problems are going to arrive after this.

CUE 14: After some reconsideration, Apu goes to Pulu to tell him that he agrees to marry the bride, Aparna.

The flute plays a slower variation of the main theme.

The music releases the tension from the previous scenes and accompanies Apu's pensive attitude.

CUE 15: Pulu gets excited about Apu's change of mind, he goes to tell his family the good news. Apu still doesn't seem very convinced about the whole thing. We then see the marriage ceremony between Apu and Aparna. Aparna's mother is moved by the new outcome of things.

The shehnai players from before play in the background, while we hear some declamations and chanting during the wedding ceremony. At the end, the wind dissonant texture from cue 6 is added to the shehnai.

Superposition of diegetic and non-diegetic elements that accompany the ceremony, while conveying some feeling of uneasiness at the same time, almost like an omen.

CUE 16: View of the river with some boats, mostly quiet. Then, Apu is with Aparna in a room. He seems troubled and neither of them are talking. She seems distant, or shy. Apu is worried that they are getting married knowing almost nothing about each other. They start talking. A beautiful relationship is beginning.

A solo male voice sings throughout the entire length of this 3-minute music cue. The lyrics seem based on some traditional legend, or religion. The vocal style is very virtuoso, with a big melodic range and a richly ornamented melody. The voice has that raspy, almost shouted voice typical of styles like flamenco.

When the music begins over the river view, we have the impression that the song being sung could be coming from the scene. That doesn't last, as the image quickly transitions to the room. The song, likely coming from the river fishermen, lasts throughout the entire conversation between Apu and Aparna. Therefore, we have here another interesting use of the contrast between diegetic and non-diegetic.

CUE 17: Apu is warning Aparna about him not having any money, about him not going to be able to offer her the life level that she is used to. Aparna doesn't mind, she accepts having a life together with him.

The dilruba (could be the tar shehnai instead) plays a long improvised solo, some of the motives from the main theme are used in the improvisation.

The music is essential to achieve this very expressive scene. The music and their conversation are filled with both intensity and tenderness.

CUE 18: Apu is now more relaxed and cheerful. They are moving back to Calcutta together. We see some outdoors shot of the city. They arrive at Apu's apartment.

The sitar plays an introduction. Then, an ensemble (consisting of at least of sitar, flute, pakhawaj and zills) plays the main theme.

The solo sitar at the beginning supports the closing of the characters' conversation, while introducing the entrance of the ensemble. This entrance, together with the transition to the shot of Calcutta's landscape, creates a strong impact on the viewer. The optimistic tone of the music accompanies their arrival to the city and the beginning of a new life together.

CUE 19: Aparna is alone in the room. She slowly turns towards the window and cries. Many changes in life going on at once. As she is crying, she sees through the window a kid and a woman playing. As she stops crying, Apu arrives. He worries about her being upset, but she doesn't look sad at all.

As in cue 17, we now have another long improvised solo. The sarod plays a slow and sorrowful melody that keeps evolving, shifting between different emotions and levels of intensity as the images change. After a short pause, the piece resumes, now playing the main theme.

The music contributes to the depiction of Aparna's loneliness, doubt and sadness. Towards the end of the scene, the short pause in the music gives us a symbolic hint. The stop of the music (when Aparna also stops crying) marks Aparna's change of mood, or rather her acceptance of her new reality, which happens before Apu has even appeared in the scene. Apu didn't interrupt her crying, she stopped looking sad before he then arrived. She has moved on and she's willing to try.

CUE 20: Aparna descends the stairs of the building, the neighbour and a group of children are eager to meet her. They start playing sea shells as horns.

It's the same idea and sounds from cue 6.

The way the dissonant music ends up replacing the sound of the movie by the end of the cue, while the scene remains lively and cheerful throughout, gives a menacing effect. The sound is first perceived as diegetic and its dissonant sound doesn't clash with the image. As the sound from the scene fades out and the music texture becomes more

present, we start perceiving the wind dissonances as non-diegetic and the contrast with what we are seeing on the screen becomes obvious. Could be a long-shot to say this cue foreshadows Aparna's early death.

CUE 21: Aparna is on the terrace and she gets disgusted by a cockroach. She kills it. Apu comes out of the house onto the terrace, playing his flute.

Solo melody on the flute, played by Apu.

Both the music and the scene have a circular, routine character.

CUE 22: Apu pensively walks around the terrace. He enters to talk to Aparna.

We can already see a trend in this film of having a long solo instrument improvisation accompanying the scene and supporting its emotional content. Like in cue 19, it's the sarod.

The sound of the sarod and the character of the player fit well Apu's moment of reflection.

CUE 23: Aparna tells Apu to give up his private student, that she doesn't care much about money and that she just wants to get to spend more time with him. We then see Aparna in front of a mirror, painting her bindi and her hair's part line. Apu is arriving, she gets ready to give him a jump scare. He laughs. We see Aparna fanning Apu while he eats. Then Apu fanning Aparna.

Dilruba and tar shehnai start playing together, heterophonically. The melody's character is nostalgic, yet hopeful. It uses some motives of the main theme. Then the sitar takes over, playing a fast melody while creating a full-sounding accompaniment.

The dilruba and tar shehnai contribute to the innocence and emotion in Aparna's words. Then the lively music that the sitar plays links different images and accompanies the passing of time and the strengthening of their relationship.

CUE 24: Apu is teaching English to Aparna. She's very committed to the learning.

This short cue resumes the sitar playing from the previous one.

The music is highlighting Aparna's curiosity and will to learn.

CUE 25: Aparna and Apu are at the cinema. They are watching an epic intense film. Aparna is completely absorbed by the images.

We hear the soundtrack of the film they are watching. It's written in a very dramatic post-romantic Germanic way.

The scene from the film they are watching could almost be a *Sturm und Drang* cliché.

CUE 26: Apu and Aparna are talking, as they go home after the cinema. She is going back to her parent's house for a couple months. They have really started caring about each other. They are developing a happy and wholesome relationship. Both of them look very comfortable with each other.

The dilruba is loosely improvising around the main theme once more. Towards the end of the cue, the sitar starts playing in a similar style.

Similar composition approach to what we've seen in other solo improvised cues. The instrument is accompanying the emotional nuances of the scene.

CUE 27: After reading a letter he received from Aparna, Apu walks around the train tracks. He picks up a baby who's sitting on the floor and takes him to his cradle.

Lively and rich sitar piece. A repeated note is played on the flute, like an ostinato.

At several points the flute sounds like it could be the whistling of the train, making the line between diegetic and non-diegetic blurry again. The character of the music is highlighting Apu's joy. It's the calm before the storm. After this last section, in which we have seen Apu being genuinely happy living with Aparna, his life is going to take a dark turn again that is going to last for most of the remaining length of the film. In the very last cue, as the film ends on an optimistic note, we will hear this music again.

CUE 28: Murari, Aparna's brother, tells Apu she has passed away during childbirth. For the last time in the trilogy, Apu loses someone who was very important in his life. He

doesn't even know how to react and he punches Murari. We then see different scenes of Apu lying in bed, seemingly depressed. His neighbour tries to console him.

Right before this cue, we distantly hear some music being played far in the background. As Apu finds out about his wife's death, the music tensely grows until it explodes in an oppressive dissonant texture. Then the tar shehnai dramatically takes over and we resignedly finish with the sarod.

The music follows Apu's feelings, from the climax of his despair to the depressed process of acceptance that comes afterwards.

CUE 29: Before this scene we have seen Apu considering killing himself by jumping on the train tracks. Now he is writing a letter to Pulu, saying he is willing to move on and to get away from Calcutta.

The tar shehnai and the sitar play together in this slow and emotive segment.

Apu is strong. Despite everything that has happened to him so far, he still doesn't give up and hopes to find happiness again. The music conveys his calm approach to resignation and fight.

CUE 30: Apu's baby is sleeping next to his grandmother, who's mourning for her daughter's early death.

The sarod plays sparsely and sorrowfully. The dilruba closes the cue.

We are watching Apu's lowest and saddest moment in the film. The sarod is expressing that, almost like a musical cry.

CUE 31: Apu is walking around the forest, admiring and appreciating nature. There's something mystical or religious about the scene.

Appearances of the flute playing a bright and characteristic melody in different ways and registers. The melody is supported by different instruments (some of them Western), like the violin, the piano, the cello, the sitar and the pakhawaj. As he throws away the manuscript, the flute is replaced by the dilruba.

This piece stands out among the rest of the music of the film. It's very melodically and harmonically distinctive. In the scene we are watching a moment of personal transformation.

CUE 32: Apu's son is in the countryside, walking around and playing. He's wearing a mask. He shoots a bird with a slingshot. Pulu is watching him.

Playful music constructed with ostinatos and percussion. The music stops twice, in sync with the shots.

Both the character of the music and the mood of the scene bring us back to *Pather Panchali*, to Apu's and Durga's childhood.

CUE 33: Apu steals some food from a woman who is cooking in the forest and runs away.

We hear the same sitar music from the very beginning of the trilogy, when Durga used to steal fruit from the neighbours' orchard.

The cheerful music accompanies Apu's running. Using the same music that was played back when Durga did the same thing brings a sense of nostalgia and cycle.

CUE 34: Kajal (Apu's son) threatens a man saying that his father will come from Calcutta to beat him up. He has the innocence characteristic of a kid his age.

The tar shehnai plays a piercing melody that sounds like a lament.

The music is expressing Kajal's lack of a father figure.

CUE 35: Pulu smiles at Kajal. We then see Apu walking uphill, close to the mine where he is now working.

Same music from cue 31.

Even if the scenes in cues 31 and 35 are completely different, sharing the same music makes sense. Both cues symbolise Apu's period wandering around different places in India trying to find himself.



CUE 36: Pulu is trying to convince Apu to go back to his son. Apu apparently feels nothing for Kajal. He has never met him and he blames him for taking Aparna away from him.

Collective chanting, could sound like a ritual song.

It is unclear whether the music is coming from the scene or not. The song and the mixing of the music would match a diegetic cue. However, we don't get to see the singers at any point. The music doesn't seem to add any emotional content to the scene, it is only providing rural context (which would be fitting if the music was indeed coming from the scene).

CUE 37: Apu confesses to Pulu his lack of feelings towards his son and the way he still feels strongly attached to Aparna. He will keep sending money to his son, that's all he can do. Pulu leaves.

We hear the same descending flute melody that we heard at some tragic moments in *Aparajito*. It is also accompanied by the high ringing sound.

Apu is heartbroken. Despite some time having passed and him being far away from home, he is not ready to move on yet. He suffers deeply.

CUE 38: Apu sees Kajal for the first time. He's asleep. Apu remains silently looking at him for a while. He's deeply moved. He's also probably experiencing many feelings at once. The music stops as Apu wakes Kajal up.

Same song from music cue 16.

This is a powerful scene and the song goes along with it perfectly. Deep feelings of love, fear and remembrance are intertwined. It's interesting to see how the feeling of the music changes compared to when we listened to the same song in cue 16.

CUE 39: Kajal wakes up and gets scared. He runs outside the house. Apu approaches him and tries to talk to his son. Kajal throws a rock at him. His grandfather appears and scolds him.

The high-pitched electronic sound that we have heard several times returns. Same as what happened in cue 32, the sound is interrupted when Kajal throws the rock.

There's tension in the scene. Kajal doesn't believe that Apu is his father. He's untrusting and cautious. The 'unpleasant' sound helps in creating this sense of tension.

CUE 40: Kajal's grandfather blames Apu for not assuming responsibility of his child. Apu then starts walking away from the village.

The solo dilruba plays a melody that ascends slowly.

The ascending movement of the melody creates a feeling of anticipation in the listener. The film is coming to an end and something else needs to happen to conclude the trilogy.

CUE 41: Apu is slowly walking away from the village, seeing how Kajal discreetly follows him. They talk and Kajal agrees to come with him to Calcutta. The grandfather looks at the scene from a distance, pleased.

Somewhere between music and sound design. It sounds like pitched wind, probably noise with a band-pass filter. A low pulsation on the sitar is later added. The tar shehnai finishes the cue.

Like in the previous cue, a sense of expectancy is experienced by the audience as the eerie sound plays constantly throughout the scene.

CUE 42: Father and son leave together. Kajal is sitting on Apu's shoulders. Apu's expressive face shows true happiness. Hopefully it will remain like this for long this time. The end.

The dilruba plays the main theme of the film one last time. Accompanied by the pakhawaj and sitar, and doubled in the upper octave by (likely) the tar shehnai. At the very end, we listen to the cheerful music from cue 27.

The return of the main theme satisfyingly gives a proper closing to the film. The brief appearance of the music from cue 27 at the end is slightly ambiguous.

## **Conclusion: The importance of music in the Apu trilogy, the European influence on Ray's filmmaking**

In this thesis we have done an analysis of the music Ravi Shankar made for Satyajit Ray's Apu trilogy. These films constitute one of the most sublime artistic achievements in Indian cinema and Shankar's truly remarkable work in the music has been decisive in turning the trilogy into a cult classic. Both Ray and Shankar are arguably considered to be among the most important figures in Indian culture and the Apu trilogy is one of the finest accomplishments in both of their careers.

In this conclusion, we will go through some of the reasons that make this soundtrack so effective, captivating and innovative. Lastly, to wrap up the thesis, we will make a brief comparison with *Bicycle thieves*, as it serves as an excellent Western reference for comparison that can allow us to discover and understand Ray's beginnings as a filmmaker and his influences.

As we can extract from the analysis done so far, music is a central element in the trilogy. Music, both popular and classical, is a very important part of Indian culture. The ratio of music time to film running time in the trilogy is 43,07%, 33,96% and 50,13%, respectively. There is a long tradition in Indian cinema of making musical films, in which songs have an important function in the narrative. Ravi Shankar's film music often goes against it, preferring incidental music instead. This is also the case in this trilogy.

Even if the music greatly evolves as the films unfold, the way music is used and the functions it plays doesn't change much throughout the trilogy. Even if the aesthetics of both the film and the music are distinctively Bengali, there are many aspects about the way the music is being used that can be similar to what we would often find in Western film music.

The soundtrack composed by Shankar for the trilogy has an important role in contributing to the effectiveness of the narrative arc and the dramatic structure. We

often hear music cues that stand out as being different than the rest when important moments in the story arrive and need to be highlighted. This is the case for example in Apu's mystical walk in the forest in *Apur Sansar*. Another way the music adds up to the storytelling is by both anticipating what's going to happen next in the film and by making us reminisce moments in the plot that have already before. We can for example hear the music acquire a sombre dark tone in apparently peaceful scenes and that gives us hints that we are building up to some tragedy (or making us remember that we come from it).

The emotions of the scenes are pretty often nuanced by the music in order to transmit complex feelings, such as resignation, annoyance, bonding between characters and despair. It is also common throughout the trilogy for the music to extend emotions beyond the duration of the scenes in which they are being expressed. This, combined with the importance of improvisation in creating the music of the films, leads to create an organic feeling. Lastly, thanks to the music we can sometimes look into character's emotions that are in apparent conflict with what we is being shown in the scene.

The sophisticated and rich characterisation in these films is also reinforced by the music. We get to perceive Durga as mischievous yet kind-hearted, Indir as both fragile and strong, Harihar has spiritual and careless elements in his personality, Sarbajaya is loving and has a very strong determination, Aparna's refreshing attitude towards life and Apu's relentless curiosity. Despite the recurrent use of some musical themes, the use of the leitmotif is not as prominent in the trilogy as we often see in European and American films.

In addition to the characters, some abstract concepts are also expressed and symbolised by the music at multiple points in the trilogy. That's the case of poverty, which is one of the main topics of the trilogy. We can hear this for example in the song sung by Indir in *Pather Panchali* and in the dissonance of some music cues that accompany ordinary routine scenes. The importance of spirituality, religion and Indian traditions is also depicted by the music at multiple points, either with the use of diegetic music or with

the use of music that has an introspective character accompanying the thought process of some characters.

The music in the trilogy plays an important role in making the audience follow the different settings in which the story is taking place. *Pather Panchali* begins in rural Bengal and the music has a distinctively folkloric sound that depicts life in the countryside and a small village. We then move to Benares in *Aparajito*, it's a buzzing city and the music becomes more active and dense. In *Apur Sansar*, the music is contributing to represent the very urbanised and slightly hostile Calcutta. The recurring use of the main theme linked to rural Bengal makes the viewer end up feeling a connection to that region. Satyajit Ray has become one of the most important figures in Bengali culture and this could almost be seen as an element of artistic patriotism.

Some other more conventional functions of film music are also present in these films. This includes the accompaniment of the movement of characters and camera, the passing of time during the length of a music cue and the linking of a succession of scenes through scene cuts.

As we mentioned in the introduction, *Pather Panchali* won the award for “Best Human Document” in Cannes. While it is true that the trilogy paints a detailed image of the hardships many people live through in India, it goes far beyond this and the music must take part of the credit for it. The trilogy is a huge achievement that combines aspects of the epic genre with strong poetic moments about love and the beauty of life.

Watching *Bicycle thieves* in London was a decisive turning point for Ray. It made him realize that he wanted to be a filmmaker and visualize what he wanted his first film, *Pather Panchali*, to be like. Ray himself said the following about the impact that the film had on him when he started his career: “the real impact came, however, from *Bicycle thieves*. Opportunely I had found a wonderful film, moving beyond words, but wonder of wonders, de Sica was doing just the things I wanted to do in my own film and succeeding beyond measure. Who said you couldn't use non-actors? Who said you couldn't shoot in the rains? Who said you had to use make-up? And who said slickness was a criteria?” (Ray, 1994, p. 25).

Italian neorealism was an artistic movement whose main purpose was to document what lower class life was like in Italy after the war. We can directly see parallelisms between that and the portrayal of the life of a modest Indian family in the trilogy. Inspired by *Bicycle thieves*, Ray wanted to make films centred around simple universal themes related to the experience of living.

In the following letter excerpt, written by Ray, he expresses his fascination with the discovery of the Italian film, while rejecting Hollywood's model of filmmaking: “the entire conventional approach (as exemplified by even the best American and British films) is wrong. Because the conventional approach tells you that the best way to tell a story is to leave out all except those elements which are directly related to the story, while the master’s work clearly indicates that if your theme is strong and simple, then you can include a hundred little apparently irrelevant details which, instead of obscuring the theme, only help to intensify it by contrast, and in addition create the illusion of actuality better” (Ray, quoted in Robinson, 2011, p. 24).

While films associated with Italian neorealism found new creative solutions to approach storytelling and filming, the use of music in these films tends to be quite conventional, nothing like what we've seen in the trilogy. Despite Ray’s words, if we compare *Bicycle thieves* with the Apu trilogy, we can clearly see that Vittorio de Sica’s film is much more linear and directional. There’s a clear plot and most of the scenes contribute to make it move forward. In alignment with that, the music (written by Alessandro Cicognini) explicitly guides our emotions to empathise with the characters and the situations depicted on the scene, it helps the viewer to follow the narrative arc that filmmaker and composer are wanting us to go through.

The Apu trilogy and the music written by Ravi Shankar for it offer us a very different experience, and that’s what makes these films so innovative and relevant in the history of cinema. They are often seemingly hectic in their progression, they are emotionally ambiguous at times and they have a fair amount of abstraction. Just like life itself. That was Ray’s ultimate goal and Shankar’s brilliant work made him succeed to achieve it.

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