

The Horrors of One-Handed Pianism: Music and Disability in *The Beast with Five Fingers*

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Pianists must have two hands.

Does the severity of that claim unsettle or comfort us? The constructed normalcy, to borrow Lennard Davis's (1995) phrase, of the performing pianist within the European cultivated tradition expects two-handedness of keyboard performers.¹ To claim the title *pianist*, one must have two functioning hands. With only one functioning hand, someone who wishes to play the piano becomes not a pianist but a one-handed pianist. The default language for piano music assumes two hands; Maurice Ravel wrote a *Concerto pour piano en sol majeur* for both a left hand and a right hand, whereas the *Concerto pour la main gauche* marks itself as different in its declaration of single-handedness. Yet as Michael Davidson (2005, 616) notes, "most pianists at some point in their career temporarily lose the functioning of one or another hand."

As proof of the anxiety-provoking connotations attached to one-handed pianism, consider the horror film *The Beast with Five Fingers* (directed by Robert Florey, 1946), whose title draws attention to the constructed monstrosity of the solitary hand. The beastly hand in question belonged to a concert pianist whose right side was paralyzed because of a stroke, and the film presents scenes of left-handed pianism with the hand as attached to the pianist, as well as by itself, after the pianist's death. Following then with the cinematic tropes of the impaired body as freakish or monstrous, *The Beast with Five Fingers* explores the possibilities for one-handed pianists within the European cultivated tradition.

In *Piano Music for One Hand*, Theodore Edel (1994, 3–11) suggests four motivations for writing one-handed piano pieces: (1) technical development, with the goal being to improve the left hand to make for better two-handed playing; (2) injury of one hand; (3) compositional challenge; and (4) as a display of virtuosity. Edel notes that the vast majority of one-handed pieces are usually for the left hand, speculating that the larger cultural insistence of right-handedness through the nineteenth century caused most left hands to be weaker

and therefore more in need of extra pedagogic attention. It may be significant to recall that through the nineteenth century in general, left-handedness was heavily discouraged; many examples throughout Western—and some non-Western—culture can be found where the left hand, the *manus sinistra*, symbolizes evil compared with the dexterity of the right hand.²

One-handed keyboard performances became increasingly popular through the nineteenth century—Edel (1994) discusses pianists Geza Zichy, Alexander Dreyschock, Adolfo Fumagalli, and twentieth-century pianist Paul Wittgenstein—and demand for one-handed piano music flourished, not by coincidence, after periods of war.³ For instance, the number of one-handed piano works published in the United States rose in the 1870s and 1880s, just after so many Civil War soldiers left limbs on the battlefield or in the surgical theater.⁴ And during the early 1940s, when production began at Warner Brothers on a horror film version of William Fryer Harvey's 1919 short story, "The Beast with Five Fingers," it did not require the gift of prophecy to foresee yet another wave of amputees. Indeed, Hollywood responded with both non-war-related maimings, as with Ronald Reagan's character in *Kings Row* (directed by Sam Wood, 1942), as well as soldiers who lost limbs in the war, as with the character of Homer in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (directed by William Wyler, 1946). *The Beast with Five Fingers*, which tells the story of a disembodied hand that seems to strangle people as well as to play Johannes Brahms' one-handed arrangement of J. S. Bach's Chaconne in D minor for solo violin, BWV 1004, contains characters with physical and mental impairments, although it treats these impairments with the familiar strategies of stigma, overcoming, and repression. In particular, Max Steiner's melodramatic score contributes a musical depiction of the social undesirability of the one-handed pianist by functioning as a kind of musical prosthesis, audibly providing much more sound than one hand alone could produce.

From Short Story to Hollywood Feature

Harvey's (1919) short story does feature an evil disembodied hand, but it was a *manus dextera*, not a left hand. Furthermore, Harvey's short story includes nothing about a stroke-paralyzed pianist, as the film version does. The short story opens with a narrator reflecting on his first meeting with a character named Adrian Borlsover; in both the literary and the cinematic versions, the perspective of who is telling the story contains significance. The audience discovers that Adrian was an eccentric naturalist, an expert on the fertilization of orchids—this detail, especially its relation to procreation, is important—and at the age of fifty Adrian suddenly went blind. A bachelor, his only relative was a nephew, Eustace. Eustace discovers something about his uncle Adrian: Adrian's right hand is capable of automatic writing. When Adrian sleeps, his right hand scribbles out long lines of seemingly nonsense prose, although it begins to write threatening messages to Eustace. Eustace is, like his uncle, a bachelor,

and early on it is revealed that he "lived alone . . . with Saunders, his secretary, a man who bore a somewhat dubious reputation in the district" (p. 20).

Within the confines of early twentieth-century British culture, both Adrian and Eustace appear to be coded as homosexual, and one reading of the short story might be to see it as a reactionary, homophobic vengeance tale where the homosexuals are haunted by supernatural forces for their implied nonheterosexual behavior. After Adrian's death, Eustace and Saunders find themselves tormented by a disembodied right hand. The two men leave the hand-infested mansion but return as the servants begin to quit, complaining about odd occurrences. They flee to another town, but the hand follows them, stowing away in Eustace's gloves. They barricade themselves in a room but then realize the hand could sneak in through the chimney. They light a fire to destroy the hand, but in the process they accidentally set the room ablaze. Saunders escapes, and as he considers going back to save Eustace, he sees a black and charred thing crawling out of the flames. Eustace dies in the flames, and the story ends with the unidentified narrator explaining that he knew Saunders as his math teacher at his "second-rate suburban school" (p. 46).

In 1942, executives from Warner Brothers began exploring the possibility of making a film version of Harvey's (1919) short story, and after acquiring the literary rights from his wife for £200, a series of screenwriters were brought in to begin the process of adapting the story to the big screen, although only one writer—Curt Siodmak—ultimately received a screen credit.⁵ When working on screenplays, Warner Brothers' writers could send questions about historical details to the studio's research department. Studio records document who asked questions as well as the question itself, the date it was asked, and when it was answered. In the case of *The Beast with Five Fingers*, the research record provides clues as to when, how, and even who was behind the story's change in the character of Adrian Borlsover, the blind naturalist, to Francis Ingram, a half-paralyzed concert pianist. Curt Siodmak's first question in the research log was for the "name of piece of music written for the left hand by M. Ravel. When written and performed?" (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, 31 May 1945) to which he got the response, "For the Left Hand, Concerto for Piano, completed in 1931, first performed in Vienna, Nov. 27, 31, by Wittgenstein and conducted by Ravel. Info: LAPL [Los Angeles Public Library]." On August 14, 1945, Siodmak returned with another question, this time a request for an Italian translation of "Concerto for the Left Hand." Finally, on September 7, 1945, Siodmak sent a memo to producer William Jacobs suggesting "Concerto for the Left Hand" as an alternative title for the film. All of this archival evidence points to Siodmak as the likely culprit responsible for injecting not just music but specifically music for a one-handed pianist into the film version.⁶ There were no copies of contracts with the composer, Max Steiner, and presumably he did not become involved with the film until relatively late in the process, as was typical with Hollywood films both then and now.

Other materials in the Warner Brothers archive also explain the shift from the Ravel concerto to the Bach–Brahms Chaconne. Executives from the music legal division of Warner Brothers exchanged urgent memos on November 2, 1945, seeking permission to clear the Ravel concerto for use in the film. A memo to Leo Forbstein, musical director of the film, responded that the concerto would have to be used in its entirety and thus was impractical. Forbstein responded three days later, on November 5, saying they should “forget about ‘Concerto for Left Hand.’ Will try and replace it with something else.” (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, 5 November 1945) None of the other records indicated who suggested the Bach Chaconne, but press releases for the film did contain a curious tidbit related to the Chaconne’s appearance.

Victor Aller, member of the Warners’ music department, composed a Bach Choconne [sic] for [performance by] Victor Francen; this is a piece written for the left hand. Francen practised [sic] for some 200 hours in order to acquire the proper technique (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, n.d.).

Victor Aller was related to Eleanor Aller, a cellist who recorded with the Hollywood studios and who, with her husband, Felix Slatkin, and Paul Shure and Paul Robyn, formed the Hollywood String Quartet. Aller was employed by Warner Brothers in the 1940s as the orchestra manager. He also gave piano lessons in Hollywood, sometimes to actors who needed to play piano onscreen, as in the case of Dirk Bogarde in the 1960 Liszt biopic *Song without End*. No documents surfaced clarifying who may have recorded the one-handed Bach performance captured on the *Beast* soundtrack, but Victor Aller seems at least as likely a performer as Victor Francen, despite his two hundred hours of practicing.

Among the musical parts preserved from the recording session is a three-page solo piano part titled “Chaconne (Study No. 5),” the subtitle making obvious the reliance on Johannes Brahms’ “Studien für Klavier Nr. 5.”⁷ The unnamed reporter who attributed the arrangement of the Bach Chaconne to Victor Aller was probably mistaken, perhaps because he or she was told something about Aller and that piece—maybe that Aller performed it or that he was Francen’s teacher for it?—but apart from a few minor differences, such as slight changes in slurring, Brahms’ and Hollywood’s arrangements are identical, perhaps most tellingly in their dynamic markings. As Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann in 1877, he wanted to have something of the experience of the violinist in playing the Chaconne and so arranged the piece for the pianist’s left hand alone.⁸ The decision to use the Brahms–Bach Chaconne instead of the Ravel concerto, though likely motivated first of all by financial considerations, still brought to the film a pianistic work already associated with questions of normative and adaptive keyboard writing.

The film version of *The Beast with Five Fingers* was an important project for Warner Brothers, commanding the healthy budget of \$724,000—the total

from the 6 November 1945 budget. It was directed by Robert Florey, a French emigré who had been involved with Grand Guignol plays as a teenager and who wrote the original script for Universal’s film version of *Frankenstein*.⁹ Strongly influenced by German Expressionist cinema like Robert Wiene’s *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari* (1920) or Friedrich Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922), Florey specialized in horror films, and his output included *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932), *The Florentine Dagger* (1935), and *The Face Behind the Mask* (1941). Peter Lorre was not the executives’ first choice to play the role of Hilary Cummins, the odd secretary to pianist Ingram; producer William Jacobs had Sydney Greenstreet and Claude Rains higher on his list of casting possibilities dated September 11, 1945. Lorre’s history with similar roles—including the psychotic child murderer in *M* (directed by Fritz Lang, 1931) as well as in his first Hollywood film, *Mad Love* (directed by Karl Freund, 1935), where Lorre played a doctor who replaces the damaged hands of a famous concert pianist with those of a criminal, leading to mayhem—made Lorre an inspired choice, even though some reviews criticized him for overacting in the role of Hilary.

Siodmak’s script converted Adrian Borslover into a rich and eccentric concert pianist, Francis Ingram, who has suffered a stroke that paralyzed the right side of his body. Dependent on a nurse, Julie, and a wheelchair, Ingram continues concertizing because of an arrangement of the Bach Chaconne prepared for him by the composer and con man, Bruce Conrad, played by Robert Alda.¹⁰ A frustrated composer, Bruce complains at one point in the film that he has been able to do nothing creatively since arranging the Bach Chaconne for Ingram, declaring that he has become “court jester to a cripple, dependent upon his charity, a dealer in modern antiques.” When the audience first meets Bruce in the film, he is scamming U.S. tourists by selling them relatively worthless European cameos for inflated prices. Siodmak includes a subtle yet pointed criticism of one-handed pianism and performances by people with disabilities by linking Bruce’s (or Victor Aller’s or Steiner’s or Brahms’) arrangement of Bach, which allowed Ingram to continue performing, to the profitable sale of forgeries: Both are to be understood as fraudulent.

Yet even stranger characters inhabit Ingram’s villa. Ingram’s secretary, Hilary (Peter Lorre), appears to have little to do with his employer, insisting instead on spending his time with the massive library of ancient books housed at the villa. Ingram mysteriously dies, falling down the stairs during a stormy night, and his will leaves everything to Julie instead of to Hilary or to his relatives, including his nephew, Donald. Faced with the possibility of leaving his beloved books, Hilary begins to act oddly. Not long after Ingram’s funeral, the local police *commissario* is shocked to find that Ingram’s left hand is no longer attached to the rest of his corpse. Soon a number of stranglings plague the villa, and Hilary claims to see Ingram’s disembodied hand crawling about and to see and hear the hand playing the Bach Chaconne at the piano. In one scene, Hilary confronts the hand at Ingram’s desk, the hand waving around its

middle finger in search of Ingram's ring, which Hilary lovingly slides onto the finger before shoving the hand into a drawer. Eventually the hand strangles Hilary to death, or so it seems—apparently Hilary has a heart attack from the fear of being attacked by this hallucination.

At times the tone of the film takes on a comic flavor, sometimes intentionally though sometimes perhaps not by design, as Lorre's exaggerated acting shifts the film toward a camp aesthetic.¹¹ When the stranglings begin to occur, Siodmak employs conventions of a mystery film, with each of the characters having motives and alibis. When the true murderer, Hilary, is revealed at the end—and the revelation gets overplayed to ridiculous proportions—the film lapses into sheer bathos as the *commissario* terrifies himself with his own hand, which threatens to strangle him. Siodmak did not approve of the comic relief, although his complaints to the producer failed to persuade him to make any changes.¹²

Audiences responded to the film with laughter, as several contemporary reviews in the studio's clippings file make clear. A February 6, 1947, review in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* said that “the opening audience yesterday quite literally hooted it down,” whereas the February 13 *Chicago Sun* reviewer, Henry T. Murdock, wrote that “as it progresses and Peter Lorre begins to chew big hunks out of the scenery the audience laughs instead of shivers.” And Mae Tinée was repulsed that audiences would laugh at the supposedly gruesome scenes, as she wrote in the February 15 *Chicago Tribune*: “For some reason the audience at the Rialto found such scenes as that in which [Hilary] hammers the hand down with a nail and tosses it into a fire, only to have it crawl out, vastly amusing—a sentiment I could not share.”¹³

The mobile disembodied hand has been a recurring motif within horror films, so much so that it has become a stock convention of the genre. Onscreen appearances of disembodied hands that do not move on their own go back further, including the presence of one in *Un Chien Andalou* (1928), by surrealist filmmakers Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel. Buñuel returned to the image of the disembodied hand in *El Ángel Exterminador* (1962), and he is sometimes, probably incorrectly, attributed with having been involved with the production of *The Beast with Five Fingers*, perhaps because according to Taves, Buñuel claims in his autobiography to have written some of the scenes.¹⁴ Skal (2001, 128) links the “bodiless pair of hands, clinging to a barbed-wire fence” in *All Quiet on the Western Front* to the hands of the creature in *Frankenstein* as he draws parallels between the bodily maimings of World War I and the Universal horror films of the 1930s. Other films involving disembodied hands include *The Crawling Hand* (Herbert L. Strock, 1963), *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* (Freddie Francis, 1965), *And Now the Screaming Starts* (Roy Ward Baker, 1973), and *The Hand* (Oliver Stone, 1981). The trope of the disembodied hand was familiar enough for it to be parodied in the 1964 television series

The Addams Family, where the hand named “Thing” joins other stock horror characters like a Frankenstein monster and a vampire. Even an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (“Life Serial,” episode 0605 from season six) features an independently mobile disembodied hand, a mummy's hand roaming in the Magic Shop.

The Beast with Five Fingers builds up tension for the disembodied hand, which the audience does not see until relatively late into the picture. Although all of the circumstantial evidence causes it to appear that a bodiless hand has been crawling around and strangling people in the Ingram villa, Hilary is the only character who ends up seeing the hand. In one of the most radical departures from the short story, the film reveals its tricks and illusions by driving home, in a rather overblown manner, the information that Hilary, and no other character, sees the disembodied hand. After an increase in the level of the sound effects—the score calls for a wind machine here, but it sounds as though it may have been altered in some way—the solo piano version of the Chaconne returns with some impressive special effects photography showing the hand at the keyboard (see Figure 6.1).

As the camera pans between Hilary and Julie, both of them looking down at the piano, the level of the music rises and falls so that as viewers see Hilary,

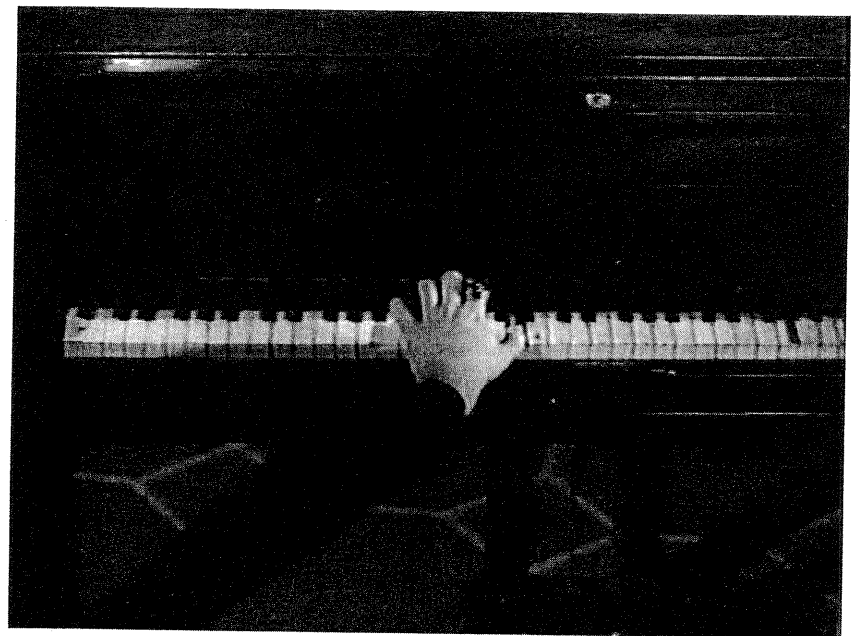


Figure 6.1 Ingram's disembodied left hand performs the Brahms-Bach Chaconne.

they hear the Chaconne; then with a pan to Julie, the music disappears.¹⁵ This back and forth panning occurs three times; the overrepetition creates a comic effect and perhaps is some of the cause for the laughter reported by the reviewers, although normative anxieties over cinematic representations of disability might also have prompted some nervous snickers.

Max Steiner's Contributions

Most famous as a composer of epic, melodramatic film scores that employed the vocabulary of European post-romanticism, such as those for *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) or *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), Max Steiner rarely wrote for horror films, although his score for *King Kong* (Cooper & Schoedsack, 1933) revealed a penchant for dissonance in the service of images of fantasy.¹⁶ Steiner prided himself on his ability to react musically to what he saw on screen:

The way I approached writing music for films was to fit the music to what I thought the dramatic story should be and score according to the way a character impressed me, whoever he might be. He may be a bastard, she may be a wonderful woman, he may be a child. I write what I see. This is very difficult for anybody to understand. Especially for anybody with such bad eyesight as I have. But I see a character on the screen and that is what makes me write the way I do. That is also the reason that people enjoy what they hear because it happens to fit (Steiner 1970, 392).

Steiner's greatest gift as a musical dramatist was his skill at using music to encode an inner psychology for the characters on screen, using a musical language that was quickly recognizable to a film's mass audience. He had some experience representing bodies with disabilities: In the scores for *Of Human Bondage* (John Cromwell, 1934) and *The Informer* (John Ford, 1935), Steiner wrote rhythmically uneven melodies for characters whose leg impairments caused them to limp.¹⁷ In *The Beast with Five Fingers*, Steiner's music gives us important information about the characters, some of whose impairments are more obvious at first than others.¹⁸ In fact, Steiner's music says more about Hilary and his mental condition than it does about the more obviously impaired Ingram, whose one-handedness we learn visually.

In the scene first introducing Hilary, the secretary obsessed with Ingram's books (approximately ten minutes and thirty seconds into the film), Steiner presents a typically rich and informative underscore. The cue opens with shots of Hilary reading, as Steiner reacts with a Coplandesque style: The disjunct melodies, the spacings, the harmonies, the parallel diatonicisms, and the wind-dominated timbral palette all reflect the pastoralisms introduced into Hollywood scoring—at least partly—by Aaron Copland only a few years

earlier in film scores like *Our Town* (1940) and in ballet scores like *Appalachian Spring* (1944) (see Figure 6.2).¹⁹

The image displays a musical score for a film cue. At the top, it is labeled 'Reel 1-Part 3-2-1' and 'Ting (Quasi Misterioso)'. The score is written for a piano and includes markings for 'E. H. solo' and 'Fin. Fl.'. The music is characterized by a disjunct melody in the upper voice, with a 'Dulciana solo' marking. The lower voices provide a complex harmonic accompaniment with various textures and dynamics. The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number (13, 22, 31, 40) at the beginning of the first staff. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 6.2 Steiner's musical evocation of Hilary's mental condition.

This music becomes a theme for Hilary that Steiner develops throughout the rest of the score, and as the audience first sees Hilary, the music suggests that he exists in a tranquil, pastoral space when left alone with his books. The drooping fourths, played first in the bassoon and then joined by the flute, suggest a certain obsessiveness through their repetitions and also through the triadic response in the lower strings. While the first four bars cadence on a D-flat major chord, the second four bars cadence on the much richer E-flat thirteenth harmony. After that point, the upper melody takes on a sighing, *Seufzen*-like character, against increasingly dissonant harmonies in the lower parts. As Julie tells Hilary that “what I need is a complete change” and as Hilary begins to realize his status at the Ingram villa may be in jeopardy, Steiner brings about a complete change stylistically, moving to much lush harmonies and a more stable homophonic texture. Hilary becomes more agitated, saying “he’s [Ingram] forgotten about me” and worrying about what will happen to his work.

From watching only the image without the sound, the audience would not get as direct an idea about Hilary’s potential mental instability as they do when hearing the increasingly chromatic and dissonant underscoring. Diatonic clarity returns only when Hilary starts discussing his work on astrology, although the root position diatonic chords do not follow traditional voice-leading rules. As Hilary’s explanation of his astrological work hits a climax (m.27), Steiner responds with a massive Straussian chord that spans from low octave B’s to high octave F-sharps, including in the middle an F major seventh chord and a C-sharp major chord. As the scene quickly draws to a close and as Julie invites Hilary to dinner, the original Hilary theme returns, giving the cue an overall ternary form of ABA’, as the descending perfect fourth melodies originally presented six times are now altered in the final measures of the cue to, first, a descending perfect fifth, then to a descending augmented fifth, and then to a descending fifth. The original stability of the descending fourth is replaced with a descending fifth that alternates with an augmented fifth. Together with Lorre’s acting and Siodmak’s dialogue, Steiner’s music reveals Hilary’s perceptual variability, giving the audience an early clue that Hilary’s mood and mental state vacillate quickly and wildly.

It has become something of a commonplace in music history to note that characteristics of musical aesthetic modernism have been absorbed within Hollywood film music, but rarely are such assertions followed with specific examples. Genre plays an important role in determining what kinds of musical languages Hollywood adopts, and the genres of the horror film and science fiction—two genres that are sometimes overlapping and indistinguishable—have been particularly fruitful places for Hollywood composers to incorporate more avant-garde compositional techniques such as extended dissonances, atonality, aleatoricism, and timbral experimentation.

Steiner’s score for *King Kong* remains an exemplary early example of a Hollywood score that employs extended dissonances, but in general Steiner is regarded as representing a more reactionary musical language.²⁰ Together with Alfred Newman, Erich Korngold, and Franz Waxman, Steiner was responsible for championing a musical vocabulary in Hollywood that relied heavily on the gestures of European post-romanticism, continuing the language of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss. The most dissonant and nontraditional musical moments of *The Beast with Five Fingers* occur during the cue called “The Storm,” which underscores the scenes of Ingram’s death as he falls down a flight of stairs. The presence of dissonance here is not surprising, as these dissonant, unstable sounds present a direct analogue with the expressionist cinematic techniques. The nonlevel camera angles, the deep shadows, the unsettled camera movement, and the wavy shots of the double-exposed piano work together with the music to create an effect of confusion, fear, and suffering (See Figure 6.3).

As Ingram tries to focus on the piano, Steiner returns to the Chaconne theme introduced in the Main Title, played by both piano parts—only he writes them in close but different keys (E minor, F minor), creating a moment of bitonality that runs parallel to the double-exposure photography.²¹ Here techniques of aesthetic modernism are put to the service of amplifying the horrific, the terrible—and in connection with the piano, the body with disability, for the piano serves metonymically as a reminder of Ingram’s nonnormative body. Bitonality here serves as a reminder of Ingram’s bifurcated body, split into active and passive sides by a stroke. One would not need two pianos, however, to create bitonality at the keyboard, and Steiner’s—or Friedhofer’s or Cutter’s—decision to accompany Ingram’s death with not one, not two, but four hands playing piano presents a moment of musical prosthesis, whereby the melodramatic underscore, the rich sound valued for the plenitude it brings to the image, substitutes a greater pianistic sound than the pianist pictured on the screen could have actually produced by himself. Just as Ravel constructed his piano concerto for Wittgenstein so that it would prosthetically create



Figure 6.3 Bitonal statement of Chaconne theme during Ingram’s death (pianos 1 and 2 only from the full score).

the illusion of having been performed by a pianist with two hands, Steiner similarly generates a musical illusion of multihandedness, relying on the four invisible hands of the studio performers.²²

Disability and Horror, Disability and Music

The Hollywood horror film provides an important site for investigating broader cultural anxieties about disability, and in specialized cases like *The Beast with Five Fingers* the focus narrows to music and musicians. Robin Wood's (1979, 14) formulation of the horror film—"normality is threatened by the Monster or the Monstrous"—raises the issue of normalcy, a concept of keen interest within disability studies. What is monstrous, and what is normal, after all?²³ As Wood points out, his formula causes potential overlap with other genres: Replace *monster* with *Indian* and suddenly it's a Western. Hollywood monsters during the period of the 1930s and 1940s were usually fairly well demarcated through acting, makeup, costume, lighting, and of course music. Monsters look different and threatening, and what they seem most to threaten is normality itself.

The entire horror genre repeats narrative patterns that see the continued repression and oppression of anything defined as nonnormative. Wood (1979) observes that sexuality often powers the monstrous element in these films—that libido threatens the bourgeois patriarchal system. From this Marxist and Freudian positioning, he reads films with a sharp eye toward the role of sexuality, particularly how sexuality gets repressed within the narrative structures of these films. Although the *Monster*, or *Monstrosity*, may have a sexual component to it, it may also be tied up with representations of bodies with impairments, or fragmented bodies, and it is at this juncture—the juncture between monstrosity and the nonnormative body—where disability studies has theories that can inform the readings of film and music.²⁴

The Beast with Five Fingers uses conventions of the horror film to reinscribe the social undesirability of the one-handed pianist. Davis (1995) drew particular attention to a pervasive need within Western culture to hide the mutilated or fragmented body, an impulse articulated as *social erasure* by Mitchell and Snyder (2000). *The Beast with Five Fingers* provides multiple examples of these repressions and erasures. The film shows first a one-handed pianist playing Brahms' left-handed arrangement of Bach's Chaconne in D minor. Then, after the pianist's death, the disembodied left hand continues to play the same piece. Finally, the film reveals that the presumed monstrosity of the disembodied hand was nothing more than a hallucination, removing even the possibility of the one-handed pianist and his ostensibly horrific threat to the normal body, as well as the presumably horrific threat to the symbolic body of classical music and its implicit messages of perfect form and perfect execution. Hollywood did not simply make up this erasure of the one-handed pianist for a 1946 genre film; instead, Hollywood could turn to larger cultural

institutions, including the traditions of European and U.S. music-making and musicology, for centuries of the invisible, yet performing, disabled body.

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Notes

1. Davis (1995) devoted a chapter of *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* to the topic of constructing normalcy.
2. Lubet (2004, 136) discussed left-handedness as both an impairment and a disability, observing that for orchestral string players, who must bow with their right hand and tune with their left hand, "WCM [Western classical music] may be unsurpassed in creating a major impairment from a common human variation that presents few if any limitations elsewhere: left-handedness." Lubet noted that "while adaptive options for lefties exist, some players like [Jimi] Hendrix simply invert right-handed instruments" (ibid.). No such options exist for string players in an orchestra.
3. Perhaps the most famous one-armed pianist of the twentieth century, Paul Wittgenstein (brother of Ludwig) commissioned works for the left hand from several famous composers, including Benjamin Britten, Erich Korngold, Sergei Prokofiev, Ravel, and Richard Strauss. Flindell (1971, 112) reported that one of Wittgenstein's teachers, Austrian composer Josef Labor, was blind, although he does not link that to Wittgenstein's later path; he does however resort to the familiar overcoming narrative when describing Wittgenstein's resolve after losing his arm, writing of his "heroic response to his personal catastrophe." Similarly, Arell (1950) compiled a set of musical overcoming narratives in "Defects into Dividends."
4. Several composers, including Arthur Foote (1853–1937), produced works for one hand. One popular compositional idiom at that time was the transcription of folk melodies; thus, many of the single-handed pieces were arrangements of such familiar tunes as "Home, Sweet Home." For example, see James M. Welhi's arrangement of "Home, Sweet Home" for the left hand, available electronically at the Library of Congress's *American Memory* website: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/sm1870.03144>.
5. This information, as well as the other production details noted in the following, comes from a study of the materials for *The Beast with Five Fingers* that I conducted in October 2003 at the Warner Brothers archive at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Siodmak worked the longest on the screenplay, and studio records reveal that some of the most interesting adaptations from short story to screenplay originated with him. Siodmak specialized in horror films, writing numerous scripts including *The Wolf Man* (1941) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943); his novel, *Donovan's Brain* (A. Knopf, 1943), another story about the fragmentation of the human body, has been made into several films.
6. In his liner notes for the Marco Polo CD of this score, Thomas (1996) wrote that Siodmak "suggested to Steiner that he utilize the left-hand version of Bach's D minor Chaconne played by the severed hand." Larson (1997) also declared Siodmak as the person responsible for suggesting the left-hand version of Bach's Chaconne to Steiner.
7. Brahms wrote to Schumann about his one-handed arrangement of the Bach Chaconne in June 1877 (Avin 1997, 515–6), comparing his achievement of transcribing the work for one hand to the story of the egg of Columbus.
8. "The similar difficulties, the type of technique, the arpeggios, they all combine—to make me feel like a violinist!" wrote Brahms (Avin 1997, 516).
9. In fact, Florey contributed the rather important story detail that the creature's behavior was malevolent because he had been made with a criminal's brain; a later writer developed that idea further, positing that the criminal brain was only stolen after the intended normal one was dropped. Universal somewhat unceremoniously yanked the

- project from Florey, even though he had shot test scenes with Boris Karloff, but the film was given to James Whale (see Taves 1987a, 37; Curtis 1982, 72–3).
10. Alda had recently portrayed another composer, George Gershwin, in the film *Rhapsody in Blue* (Irving Rapper, 1945).
 11. Warner Brothers released posters with taglines engineered to establish expectations for a horror film: “It lives but it’s a corpse! It crawls like a spider! It kills like a cobra!” and “A sensation of screaming suspense! Sudden death striking from beyond the tomb! It’s a terror-laden smash!” (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, n.d.)
 12. Siodmak to William Jacobs, producer: “About comedy relief in ‘Beast with Five Fingers.’ Not one of Edgar Allan Poe’s stories, nor ‘Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,’ nor ‘The Horla’ by Maupassant—even ‘Hamlet’—has any comedy relief. I think the classics are right.” (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, 21 September 1946)
 13. All of these reviews are part of the clippings file at the Warner Brothers archives (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, n. d.).
 14. Taves (1987b) studied the archival records at Warner Brothers and concluded that Buñuel was not involved with *The Beast with Five Fingers*.
 15. A document titled “Notes for *The Beast with Five Fingers*” (*Beast with Five Fingers* papers, n.d.) contained the suggestion that for this scene the camera should pan between the two characters, and the music should only be heard while Hilary is visible.
 16. Steiner described his *King Kong* score as “modernistic” and “really screwy” (Steiner 1970, 393). Gorbman (1987) discussed Steiner’s style as the template for the Hollywood sound of the 1930s, whereas Kalinak (1992) explicated his music for *The Informer*. See Marks (1996) for more on Steiner’s scores for *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*.
 17. A musical term for uneven rhythms in a melody is *alla zoppa* (“limping” or “halting” in Italian), and this rhythmic figure is part of the instrumental tradition of representing physical impairments. See Straus (2006, 148).
 18. The main title sequence opens with the Warner Brothers fanfare before moving into a fully orchestrated version of Bach’s Chaconne theme. The orchestra included two flutes, two oboes, three clarinets (one doubling on bass), two bassoons (sometimes on contrabassoon), four trumpets, four French horns, four trombones, one tuba, six violins, six violas, six celli, and four basses. Further, there were six percussionists, two harps, one Hammond organ, and two piano parts (each for two hands).
 19. In Lerner (2001), I argue for Copland’s role in establishing Hollywood’s creation of a U.S. pastoral and nationalist musical language.
 20. Besides examining over fifteen files of production papers, I also studied the musical materials preserved at the Warner Brothers archive at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, which include copies of Steiner’s short score (the original is housed at the Max Steiner archive at Brigham Young University), the full score in the hand of his orchestrator, and all of the orchestral parts. There are conductor’s scores for all seven of the film’s reels, but there are no full scores or parts for reels four and five, although there is music in those reels. One mystery I discovered when perusing the scores is that although Hugo Friedhofer receives screen credit for orchestrating this film, every full score cue in the archive contained the name and, likely, the handwriting of Murray Cutter. Friedhofer was Steiner’s main orchestrator from the late 1930s until 1946, at which point Cutter became his principal orchestrator. I could locate no contracts or other records specifying musical personnel, although music department budgets from 1949—the only ones I was able to see—list Cutter as a staff orchestrator who earned a premium rate of \$10 per page. Within the hierarchies of the studio system, it was standard practice for the established and bigger names to receive credit for work that may have in fact been carried out by several individuals. Such seems to have been the case with Friedhofer and Cutter on this score; it may be the case that at most Friedhofer orchestrated two of the seven reels.
 21. In a similar way, Henry Mancini created tension in *Wait until Dark* (Terence Young, 1967)—a film that centers on the experience of a blind woman—by writing for two pianos pitched not a semitone but a quarter-tone apart (Marmorstein 1997, 334).
 22. Russ (2000, 126) argued that “Ravel conceals the limitations of the pianist multifariously” in the concerto he wrote for Wittgenstein.
 23. Tay Fizdale, who first introduced me to film studies at Transylvania University, once defined a *monster* as anything higher than you are on the food chain.
 24. In the case of Fryer’s short story, it should come as no surprise that the original homosexual components of the story get reduced to nearly nothing in the film; the relationship between Eustace and Saunders disappears, replaced with a new character, Julie the nurse, who finds herself in a love triangle involving Ingram and Bruce.

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