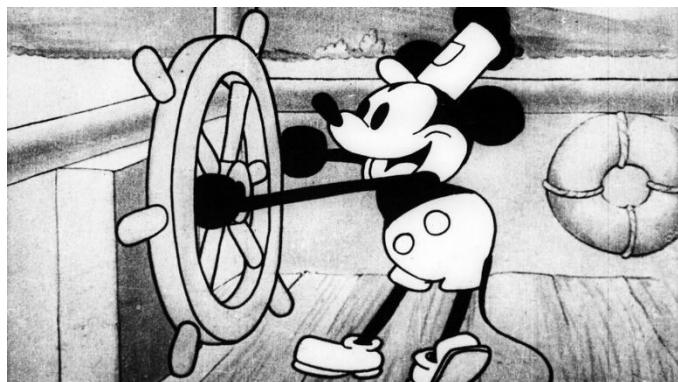


Sounds of Comedy – A guide to the music of ‘Funny Little Bunnies’

‘Funny Little Bunnies’ one of the seventy-five musical animations from Disney’s *Silly Symphony* series which ran from 1929-1929. The cartoon creatively envisions a land where rabbits make and prepare eggs for Easter.

Animations of these sort used a technique created by Walt Disney called ‘Mickey-Mousing’ in which music and sound effects are synchronised with the visuals to enhance the action (Andrew Robson, 26 March 2012). This gives music an integral part in influencing the mood of the piece and can therefore bring out the comical aspects of a cartoon.



‘Steamboat Willie’ was the first cartoon to use ‘Mickey-Mousing’

The film’s theme song is accompanied by some playful orchestral music primarily featuring woodwind instruments such as a bass clarinet or bassoon, flute and piccolo. The combinations of low and high-pitched sounds are typically associated with comedy because of the incongruousness of the sounds produced by their extremes of ranges (Miguel Mera, 2002 p.112). The lyrics explain the general happenings of the film and establish the music’s importance within the narrative structure.

Here is a walkthrough of some examples of musical comedy in 'Funny Little Bunnies'

You can watch the film here → <http://bit.ly/2EZbI01>

The first gag is a form of slapstick comedy and takes place when a bunny carrying an oversized bar of chocolate crashes into a tree.



The sound effects help to emphasise the humour within the cartoon. The slide whistle (in different forms) is the most commonly used sound effect instrument in the film. First appearing in this scene, it accompanies the bunny running into the tree trunk. This is followed by a crashing sound as he hits his head on the tree. Another crashing sound accompanies the bar flipping and hitting him on the head, creating double-farce.

In the next scene, the audience is prepared for another slapstick moment as a bunny looks over a giant pan and tries to pop chocolate bubbles until one inevitable explodes in his face. One can hear a variation of a slide whistle noise as the bunny licks the chocolate off his face.





Next up, eggs are shaped in the mould. More comical sounds are introduced, for example, a spring boing sound effect is used as the egg rolls into the wheelbarrow.



The slide whistle is used again to create rising and falling melodies accompanying a giant screw turning to open and shut the mould respectively.



The music transforms into a march-like fanfare tune, aptly matching the bunnies in military outfits using icing bags to shoot icing onto a giant Easter egg. Musically, there is a stark contrast between the farcical squirting noise as they fire the icing and dainty sounds from a

glockenspiel as the icing lands on the egg to illustrate the pretty decoration.

The sound akin to a squeaking door musically highlights the leader poking a bunny in the backside, prompting him to follow the others in the right direction. The shooting-jabbing process is repeated for further comic enjoyment.



Rabbits are not the only animals present in the Easter-egg making process. In the next scene we see a mother hen conducting hens. They each sing one note, collaboratively creating a descending scale that contributes to the soundtrack. When a hen sings a note, she lays an egg immediately after. This combination of diegetic singing and non-diegetic music is often found in musicals and other animations and thus creates an incongruity. It is also fine example of how Mickey-Mousing creates humour out of absurdity.



An array of comical moments arises as the bunnies paint the eggs. One bunny throws paint in the other bunny's face – this is reinforced by a percussive noise.

An old trembling bunny paints a wonky design on an egg as another bunny spins it. Instrumental trill sound enhances the unsteadiness of the design.



A comic horn noise is sounded as a bunny sits on a pot of paint. This is repeatedly utilized as the bunny stamps a heart on the eggs with the paint on his backside. This contrasts to a high-pitched whooshing sound played as the bunny hops to the next egg.



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The final comic moment occurs when the head of a chocolate bunny falls onto and covers a bunny's head as the bunnies send off the eggs. The bunny falls behind but is then seen scurrying across the scene. The accompanying sound to his movement brings the audience's attention to the bunny.



To Conclude:

- ☒ the immaculate synchronisation of sound and movement places the music and the narrative together.
- ☒ The reuse of sound effects help to associate them with particular funny aspects.
- ☒ Music and sound effects are not solely responsible for creating the humour but help to make it come alive by corresponding to the action.