

## Classroom Online Resource Document (CORD)

Christine Lee

### Characters and their musical themes in drama/movies

The leitmotif is assigned to each character and appears in scenes when related characters or moods come

#### \* **Definition of leitmotif (leading motive)**

- a recurrent theme throughout a musical or literary composition, associated with a particular person, idea, or situation
- a recognizable musical theme; short musical idea, often memorable associated with a character, an object, a dramatic situation, a relationship between characters

#### \* **Background**

Richard Wagner, 19<sup>th</sup> century German composer

A representative composer who applied the idea of leitmotif for his musical writings for operas

Developed the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork) where drama and music are connected expressions of a single dramatic idea

An example:

*Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1853-1869)

-a Ring cycle

*Das Rheingold*

*Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie)

-Ride of the Valkyries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRU1AJsXN1g>

*Siegfried*

*Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods)

#### \* **3 common types of leitmotifs in dramas or movies**

Hero (good guy, girl, ....)

Villain (bad guy, animal, ghost... )

Girl or Princess (as a God, purity, or an ideal entity above human beings)

#### \* **Classical example**

The story of Peter and the Wolf is told by a narrator with musical performance (by Prokofiev)

Each character is represented by the sound of each instrument with associated short melodies

e.g) cat-clarinet, duck-oboe, bird-flute, grand father-bassoon, wolf- 3 French horns, Peter-strings, a rifle shot-timpani and bass drum

## Peter and the Wolf



Peter and the Wolf by Serge Prokofiev

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfM7Y9Pcdzw>