

Article

Disney ‘World’: The Westernization of World Music in EPCOT’s “IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth”

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Abstract: Although Disney’s EPCOT theme park markets itself as a place to experience other cultures and reflect on Earth’s history, the dominance of a Western perspective omits true authenticity, specifically in the music of its nighttime show IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth. This 13-minute long presentation offers a visual retelling of humanity’s existence accompanied by an original musical score that guides the narrative. The consecutive music section titles provide insight into critical points within Disney’s story arc: Prologue: Acceleration, Chaos, Space, Life, Adventure, Home, Celebration, and Meaning. While sounds of music from other cultures do present themselves—albeit in stereotypical and clichéd fashions— they are arbitrarily highlighted within a framework of Western musical components. This framing allows Disney composers to control the perception of ‘others’ through music. Furthermore, the final Meaning section is entirely built of Euro-American musical conventions, insinuating that cultures arrive at their most enlightened, evolved selves when they become Westernized. Despite its impressive technological advances and complex musical composition, IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth is guilty of implementing Western musical frameworks that Disney utilizes in the majority of its films and theme parks.

Keywords: Disney; EPCOT; music; appropriation; world; park; entertainment; sounds; cultures

1. Introduction

For the majority of Americans, “Disney” is synonymous with high-quality entertainment and comforting family values (Anderson and Tavin 2003). By the end of the twentieth century, hundreds of millions of people were annually watching a Disney film in theaters or on home video, watching weekly Disney television shows, listening to Disney music on home audio players, and visiting Disney theme parks (Eisner 1995). To this day, Walt Disney theme parks consistently rank highest globally in amusement park attendance (Rubin 2018), firmly cementing their place in immersive entertainment. One popular—albeit sometimes controversial—cornerstone of the Disney immersion experience is the role of thematic music in transporting audiences to other ‘worlds.’ One staple attraction exemplifying this use of thematic ‘worldy’ music is IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth, the current nightly entertainment event at Disney’s EPCOT¹ theme park in Orlando, Florida. This nighttime show presents itself as a retelling of humanity’s story from Earth’s creation to modern day life, all through visuals and music. As the story evolves from the beginning of time to the modern-day world (a finale section entitled “Meaning”), the music evolves from sounds of other cultures, often stereotypical, to a completely Western Euro-American music soundscape, thus insinuating that the evolution of humanity’s ‘progress’ throughout time finally reaches ‘meaning’ once cultures become Westernized.

Disney has an established history of heavily utilizing music in films and theme parks in attempts to create aural soundscapes of exotic locales, foreign cultures, and globally vast civilizations. The very

¹ An acronym for Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow.

concept of so-called ‘world’ music is a broad notion based on musical exoticism and musical folklorism where “easily recognized musical characteristics from an alien culture are assimilated into a more familiar style, giving it an exotic color and suggestiveness” (Bellman 1998, p. ix). Though extremely popular and commercially successful, Disney music warrants frequent criticism for combining Western (Euro-American) musical elements with folk world music stereotypes often related to appropriation to present a “Disneyfied” version that is interpreted by American audiences as ‘authentic’ (Armstrong 2018). Furthermore, millions of international tourists visit Walt Disney World theme parks in Florida every year, comprising approximately 18–20% of total attendance (Garcia 2013). Consequently, people from nonWestern countries may view this Americanized perspective of their music and cultures as a problematic, false representation of themselves. Thus, the purpose of this article is to explore Disney’s use of an insinuated ‘world music’ narrative within a Westernized framework in EPCOT’s IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth.

2. The EPCOT Experience

Contextual deconstruction of the musical effects within IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth warrants an introductory analysis of the broader EPCOT experience from which the nighttime show is one fabric piece. Since its opening in 1982, EPCOT has flourished under the reputation of inviting guests to come “travel around the world” (EPCOT 2018). This enticing marketing stays true to the vision that Walt Disney himself stated should be the foundation of his visitors’ immersive experiences: “I don’t want the public to see the world they live in while they’re in the park . . . I want them to feel they’re in another world” (Wilson 1991, p. 161). EPCOT’s attendees achieve this ‘world traveling’ experience through three massive, immersive encounters: its World Showcase section, its Future World section, and its IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth nighttime show (which debuted in 1999).

EPCOT’s unique World Showcase section stands as a circular display of eleven “countries” surrounding a large lagoon (the nighttime show resides in the center of this body of water). Each country is exhibited in a world’s-fair-style pavilion (Carson 2004) with promises of offering visitors ‘authentic’—yet often clichéd—interactions with clothing, architecture, food, art, dance, and music from its represented nation. Park guests are invited to spend the day ‘sampling’ countries as they ‘travel’ from one nation to the other in a symbolic cultural buffet-like carousel.

Disney’s fondness for world-fair-style attractions is understandable due to its history with these infamous fairs. Per example, Walt Disney debuted his now iconic attraction “It’s A Small World” for the Pepsi/UNICEF pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair (Baber and Spickard 2013). The attraction consisted of visitors boarding guided passenger boats and riding through several “countries” from around the world; each “country” represented through animatronic doll-like figures wearing native folk costumes and singing the same catchy “It’s A Small World” tune (but with varying languages and musical accompaniment). Composed by Robert and Richard Sherman,² the uplifting music, singable melody, and heartwarming lyrics of the song “It’s A Small World” reinforced the visual core message of the ride: we are all united living together on one planet under “just one moon and one golden sun” (Sherman and Sherman 2017). An instant hit with audiences, Disney advertised “It’s A Small World” as an “enchanted tribute to the popular American fantasies of life overseas” (Baber and Spickard 2013)—a validation of Disney’s self-proclaimed vision of transporting people to other ‘worlds.’

EPCOT’s World Showcase acts as a grander dramatic expansion of the single-ride experience of “It’s A Small World”, but encourages the same spectatorship and passivity through stereotypical appropriated nostalgia (Giroux 1999, p. 43). The immersive ‘global’ experience within the World Showcase (as with many Disney theme park attractions) largely stems from marketing the spectacle of the “other”, often in live form, with a heavy Euro-American perspective (Nooshin 2004). EPCOT,

² A successful songwriting duo who composed for several Disney projects including *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), *Mary Poppins* (1964), *The Jungle Book* (1967), *The Aristocats* (1970), and *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977) (Price 2018).

much like American world's fairs, has one principal aim: "the packaging of world cultures and new technologies as entertainment for consumption by a mass American audience" (Nelson 1986). One not-so-subtle reminder of this Western perspective is the location of the American Pavilion in the direct center of the World Showcase, granting it the strongest geographic visibility from any angled position within the park. Its metaphorical "head of the table" seat in the World Showcase, and its accompanying lagoon seems to reinforce a mythologized notion of America's status as a beacon for all to see while (literally) being the center of the world.

In the same vein as World Showcase, EPCOT's front half of the park, named Future World, boasts several rides and attractions dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and awareness of 'other' places and people. Soarin' Around the World invites guests to take a virtual flight adventure hang gliding above natural and man-made wonders spanning the globe; Spaceship Earth welcomes riders on a slow-moving 'time-travel' odyssey exploring the historical evolution of human communication across the planet; Mission Space gives participants a motion simulation experience of orbiting the Earth and literally traveling around the world; Living with the Land offers boat tours through greenhouses giving insight into diverse ecosystems, global produce, agricultural history, and the "future of food production" (EPCOT 2018). These staple Future World attractions within the front half of the park partner with the World Showcase pavilions in the back half of the park to create a symbiotic relationship—together they claim a completed realized immersive exploration through the past, present, and future of Earth and its diverse inhabitants.

In the evening, once visitors have experienced touring the world, they are encouraged to gather around the World Showcase Lagoon and witness IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth, an award-winning nighttime entertainment show that invites park attendees to "behold the past, present, and future of Earth at this stunning fireworks show that celebrates the spirit of humanity" (EPCOT 2018). This 13 minute-long senses spectacular utilizes fireworks, lasers, pyrotechnics, water jets, and visual projections, all accompanied by an original musical score composed by British film composer Gavin Greenaway (Greenaway 1999). The visual anchor of the show is a massive revolving globe floating in the center of the lagoon: cut away oceans give an "airy and elegant feel to the structure" (Mirarchi 2011) while continents illuminate with colors, lights, images, and videos. The globe is an impressive technological feat: it is the world's first spherical video display system (Mirarchi 2011). The aural anchor of the show is a cinematic musical experience meant to evoke the symbolic soundscape of a historically evolving world. Witnessing IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth live means literally 'seeing the world' (a spinning globe framed in a rainbow-shaped backdrop of foreign country pavilions) while 'hearing the world' (a carefully-timed and themed orchestration with insinuated sounds of world music)—all from the beauty and safety of American soil. The EPCOT experience concludes visitors' day-long globe-trotting journeys with the comforting tried-and-true Disney tenet: we can all be united, overcome our differences, and find peace around the world (Baber and Spickard 2013).

EPCOT has proven itself to be a staple tourist destination for people (especially Americans) wanting to experience exoticized "others" (Carson 2004). In 2017, Epcot ranked as the seventh most attended theme park worldwide and the fourth most attended theme park in the United States (ranked only behind three other Disney parks), totaling an average of nearly twelve million annual visitors in recent years (Rubin 2018). Although the park does offer some rides and attractions beyond the 'travel around the world' theme, there is no denying a tremendous amount of visitors' attention is centered on this appealing idea of an immersive 'passport' (since the overwhelming majority of attractions, rides, and entertainment within the park follow this collective theme). It is quite evident that millions of Americans every year visit EPCOT with expectations of experiencing the 'rest' of the world.

3. The Organization of IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth

As previously stated, IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth presents itself as a boisterous visual and musical anthem celebrating globalness and progress. In contrast to the often live-performed music found among the World Showcase Pavilions, the IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth soundtrack is a

prerecorded score which is amplified through massive speakers strategically placed around the park. This is not a rare or 'lesser' approach to the execution of music. Recorded music is often used in Disney theme parks to condition an audience response (Camp 2017), especially if the desired sound source is a massive symphonic orchestra able to produce dramatic cinematic-style music (as is the case for Gavin Greenaway's densely orchestrated instrumental score for EPCOT's nighttime spectacular).

Both the IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth live show, and Greenaway's specific score divide into sections which chronologically convey the narrative 'story' of humanity. The nighttime show begins with an Introduction consisting of narration that serves to gather the attention of park guests and welcome them to the evening event; background 'mood' music accompanies the narration. Famous Disney voice actor Jim Cummings speaks this prerecorded narration.³ Once the Introduction section concludes and the narration ceases, the main show moves forward with a narrative 'story' sectioned into three "parts": PART ONE: The Earth is Born, PART TWO: The Triumph of Life, and PART THREE: Hope for the Future (EPCOT 2018). Within these three broader "parts" Greenaway's score is divided into nine continuous miniature musical sections (eight instrumental and one vocal): Prologue: Acceleration, Chaos, Space, Life, Adventure, Home, Celebration, Meaning, and the vocal song "We Go On" (Greenaway 1999). Although none of these show "parts" or musical sections are announced for the audience, nor are there any continuity breaks within the show to elicit an awareness of purposeful distinct sections, the divided headings are listed and described on EPCOT's official website and the CD album jacket for the official IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth soundtrack.

This article acknowledges that Greenaway's listed musical sections lack assignment to the three broader "parts" of the show in any written validation. The soundtrack's album jacket listing of the nine music sections omits recognition of the three broader "parts" of the show, so one must use a combination of logical listening of the score and interpretation of the written "parts" descriptions on EPCOT's website to estimate how Greenaway's musical sections group under the three larger umbrella headings. For analysis purposes, this article assumes the following logical estimation:

INTRODUCTION: Narration (background 'mood' music)⁴

"PART ONE: The Earth is Born" (Prologue: Acceleration, Chaos)

"PART TWO: The Triumph of Life" (Space, Life, Adventure, Home Celebration, Meaning)

"PART THREE: Hope for the Future" ("We Go On")

4. Musical Westernization of the World's 'Story'

Greenaway's music for IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth is meant to emotionally take us through humanity's progression from "chaos" to "meaning." However, the musical devices woven within the complex score seems to structure an alternative subliminal 'progression': nonWestern to Western. Although the sounds of other cultures embed in appropriate sections of the music's 'timeline', Western musical elements dominate the score. Additionally, as the timeline continues, the prevalence of 'world' sounds decrease while foundational components of Western music prevail in the foreground, concluding in an entirely Euro-American finale.

Some might argue that the 'progression' represented in Greenaway's score actually symbolizes humans' advancement of music organization and construction (as a product of evolving organized societies), which would coincidentally put Euro-American music as the symbol of the progression's ultimate arrival of 'success', the concluding celebration of Euro-American music is inevitable, not pompous. However, this would still be a false narrative. While it is true that organizational components of Western music are prevalent in countries all throughout the world, this does not negate the existence of a plethora of other organized systems of music. The modern world contains hundreds

³ Jim Cummings has voiced several legendary Disney characters including Winnie the Pooh and Tigger (EPCOT 2018).

⁴ Narration and accompanying music is not on the soundtrack album; it can only be heard live or in video recordings.

of different native instruments, tones, and notation systems not used in conventional Western music (Gaare 1997). Therefore, Greenaway's arrival at a purely Westernized musical finale for the insinuated enlightenment of "meaning" perpetuates an assumption that Western music is the music of humanity: humans' global journeys have all led to the doorstep of a bright, beautiful Euro-American world.

5. Musical Framing and its Purpose for Disney

To accurately analyze the musical "framing" used in EPCOT's nighttime show, it is essential to define musical "framing" first and evaluate Disney's pattern of employing it in their endeavors.

The structure of "framing" refers to the concept of the 'different' being surrounded by the familiar 'normal' (McClary 1991). Thus, in musical "framing", foreign 'other' musical sounds are preceded, followed, and accompanied by contrasting recognizable 'normal' sounds (Armstrong 2018). This structure allows the composer to control the depiction, portrayal, and perception of the 'other' (Armstrong 2018). Musical "framing" has been a staple in Disney music, especially since the surge of Broadway-style animated musical films during the 1990s and the construction of several theme parks in recent decades.

Disney composers invest in music's ability to navigate an inventory of complicated and conflicting objectives. These objectives include framing songs in the traditional Western musical sounds that American consumers desire, inserting enough native folk-often stereotypical-musical elements to establish 'authenticity' of the represented culture in the story, and promoting Disney's emphasis on moralism and suburban 'American' values of family, patriotism, and progressiveness (Wills 2017, p. 6). The combination of these objectives is Disney's solution in creating catchy and memorable music for Western audiences that still sound 'authentic' within story settings frequently deemed 'exotic' or 'far away' (basically not in America). Critics highlight several famous examples: 'Caribbean' music in *The Little Mermaid*; 'French' music in *Beauty and the Beast*; 'Middle Eastern' music in *Aladdin*; 'African' music in *The Lion King*; 'Native American' music in *Pocahontas*; 'Chinese' music in *Mulan*; 'Polynesian' music in *Moana*; 'Mexican' music in *Coco*.

Initially, Disney did not put effort into hiring music professionals from the cultures represented to participate in the music. 'Caribbean'-sounding songs in *The Little Mermaid*, 'French'-sounding songs in *Beauty and the Beast*, 'Middle Eastern'-sounding songs in *Aladdin*, 'Native American'-sounding songs in *Pocahontas*, and 'Chinese'-sounding songs in *Mulan* were all written by American or British songwriters and sung by American voice actors (with the exception of Filipina singer Lea Salonga in *Aladdin* and *Mulan*).

Eventually, Disney did attempt to provide more authenticity through the inclusion of music professionals representative of the desired culture; however, Euro-American influences still control the music. Although South African producer Lebohang Morake sang and conducted an African choir for selected songs in *The Lion King*, all of the songs were written by British composers Elton John and Tim Rice, and mostly performed by American and British actors. Despite Polynesian musician Opetia Foa'i writing and performing certain songs in *Moana*, American Broadway composer Lin-Manuel Miranda (who is not of Polynesian ancestry) composed most of the central songs. While a variety of Mexican actors and musicians performed the majority of the songs in *Coco*, the central theme, that is repeated throughout the film as the musical anchor, was written by American Broadway writing team Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez (who are not of Mexican ancestry). Ironically, Disney even missed opportunities to have complete authenticity within films centered on American-styled music. The music of *Hercules* and *The Princess and the Frog* centers on African-American-influenced styles of gospel, jazz, blues, and R&B; however, none of the composers involved in these films were African-American (except for singer-songwriter Ne-Yo who contributed a song for the ending credits in *The Princess and the Frog*).

While the standalone merits of Disney music are undeniable (most Disney musical films earn several wins or nominations for prestigious music awards), their use of exoticism, orientalism, and Western music "framing" cannot go unacknowledged (Roca 2012). The desired effect of these music tactics is to ensure a "facade of otherness" (Wang and Yeh 2005).

6. A Musical Breakdown of Greenaway's *IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth*

6.1. Introduction

The evening show begins with an Introduction consisting of a prerecorded voiceover against a visual backdrop of blazing torches surrounding the World Showcase Lagoon. The narrator's words encourage an inner reflection of Earth's ancestry and heritage; his tone evokes a comforting, familiar quality exuding the wisdom of an elder, ancestor, tribal chief, or spiritual leader (Mirarchi 2011):

"Good evening. On behalf of Walt Disney World, the place where dreams come true, we welcome all of you to EPCOT and World Showcase. We've gathered here tonight, around the fire, as people of all lands have gathered for thousands and thousands of years before us; to share the light and to share a story. An amazing story, as old as time itself, but still being written. And though each of us has our own individual stories to tell, a true adventure emerges when we bring them all together as one. We hope you enjoy our story tonight: Reflections of Earth."

(Mirarchi 2011)

Once the narration starts, slowly crescendoing music, consisting of several sound layers, work in tandem to evoke feelings of mysticism, exoticism, and drama. These layers include both low and high long notes played by synthesizers (electric keyboards), choral voices with pitch-bends, a rainstick-sounding rattle, and dissonant harmonies most likely created from tone clusters (three or more adjacent notes in a scale) or polychords (two or more chords stacked on top of each other). Additionally, harp glissandos (an 18th Century European finger strumming style) enter in the vein of stereotypical "flashback" or "dream" sequence conventions (Day-O'Connell 2007, p. 147).

The combination of these layers creates an initial soundscape that debuts the grander notions the entire score's framework will represent. The first notion is Earth's 'story' told through the perspective of a modern-day platform. The instrumentation symbolizes the dichotomy of the 'new' telling about the 'old': synthesizers (a very modern and technologically advanced instrument in music's history) serve as the consistent drone foundation for sporadic historical older 'native' sounds such as a rainstick, harp, and singing voices. Secondly, the notion of a Western musical "frame" becomes established. Although hand percussion instruments, such as rainsticks and vocal pitch-bends are natively nonWestern, cliché harp glissandos, electronic keyboards, and droning synthesizer harmonies are all derivatives of Western music. Thus, the majority of the Introduction's music forges a consistent Western foundation that serves to anchor the randomly heard nonWestern sounds. As a result, two different Westernized musical "frames" have been architected: the completion of a miniature "frame" within the specific Introduction section and the setup of a broader "frame" for the entire upcoming score. The establishment of these framed perspectives (new defines old, Western defines nonWestern) creates a symbolic, yet conflicted connection to the narrator's words: "And though each of us has our own individual stories to tell, a true adventure emerges when we bring them all together as one" (Mirarchi 2011). Although the narration's sentiment of equality is recognized within the music, the representation of all of the Earth's 'individual' music coming together as 'one' is heavily one-sided.

Once the narrator finishes his final sentence, the music ceases and he 'blows' out the torches in a dramatic simultaneous fashion, leaving the audience in darkness and silence.

6.2. "Part One: The Earth is Born"

EPCOT's official description of PART ONE is as follows:

"Earth's fiery birth begins with flames and fireworks erupting from the lagoon. Beneath a swarm of heavenly explosions, red and golden lights blaze on the shimmering waters. As the volcanic effects subside, a glowing globe glides peacefully across the waters."

(EPCOT 2018)

6.2.1. Prologue: Acceleration

During the darkness, a large low sounding drum begins beating. The drumming starts slow, each hit's reverb dramatically ringing through the open air. After a few slow beats, the drumming begins to pound faster, accelerating to an intense, rapid pounding. The acceleration leads up to a climax where a haunting 'screech' sound abruptly cuts off the drum. During the 'screech' effect, a single firework cannons upwards and arcs across the sky until another firework (unseen up to this point) explodes above the middle of the lagoon; this is a clear representation of the 'big bang' (or any alternative theory to the sparking of Earth's creation).

This musical section is an example of an appropriate 'world' music choice. Drums are historically the oldest, most primitive ways in which humankind began interpreting sound. Built of animal bones and hide, drums became a crucial part in various aspects of human life; some historians even hypothesize that humans may have communicated through "drumming language" (as observed in African wild chimpanzees) before the creation of spoken language (Dean 2012, p. 4). Greenaway's acceleration of the drum pounding is also a wise choice because it erases the perception of an organized rhythm or beat; humans were drumming before conscious notions of structured rhythm and beat were ever conceived. Thus, choosing the sound of a single out-of-rhythm drum as representation of the beginning of our planet is defensible.

6.2.2. Chaos

At the exact moment of the first firework's explosion, a symphony orchestra bursts with a lively and complex musical tapestry, thus commencing Chaos. Fireworks synchronize with powerful music 'hits' while massive fire flames continuously erupt from ground areas. The musical score is itself fiery. Violins and violas speed through a reoccurring melody (called a motif) outlining the notes heard in a medieval European music scale known as the 'Dorian mode.' Cellos (and perhaps basses) lay an underneath foundation of a technique called 'ostinato', referring to a repeated pattern of notes and rhythms. Various pitched and nonpitched percussion instruments mimic the rhythm of the melodic motifs and provide dramatic moments of percussive 'hits' (these include cymbals, tambourine, gong, and drums). Woodwind and mallet instruments provide secondary melodies and harmonies that both complement and contrast the string parts. Low brass instruments (especially french horns) create theatrical cinema-style musical passages while high brass instruments, such as trumpets, join certain woodwind and mallet 'hit' moments in climatic fashion. The organized beats of the music (called 'meter') are consistently odd and purposefully scattered. The music alternates between 7-5-11-9 beats per measure, thus creating an unstable, off-balanced feel for the listener due to the uneven number of beats (Mirarchi 2011).

It is in this Chaos section that we return to the Western music framework. The music anchors itself in an entirely Western symphonic orchestra structure. This 'chaotic' music assembles in very structured concepts of rhythm, harmony, tonality, and instrumentation that is specifically Euro-American. This section of the score is in the exact vein of American symphonic film scores, referred to by music theorist Frank Lehman as the "Hollywood-style" tonality and elements (Lehman 2018). Bowed string instruments, dramatic brass instruments, woodwind sections, European music modes, melodic motifs, and ostinatos are all a part of the "Hollywood-style" symphonic orchestra. Thus, we have another piece to the Western framework of the world's 'story': before we arrive at the upcoming Life section where humans begin existing (historically in Africa), Western music has already claimed its dominance.

6.3. "Part Two: The Triumph of Life"

EPCOT's official description of PART TWO is as follows:

"Our individual stories culminate in one adventurous tale. The illuminated surface of the globe reveals the history of humanity and the achievements of our time."

(EPCOT 2018)

6.3.1. Space

The fiery Chaos music quickly ceases and lands on a low drone note played by basses. The basses decrescendo as synthesized long notes present themselves, first hovering and then pitch bending downwards towards a new tonal center. Once arrived at this new tonality, string instruments enter playing a fluid melodic passage. Accompanying the strings is a harp playing gentle arpeggios (17th Century European technique of playing the notes of a chord one at a time). Soon after, an oboe enters with a new melody, in the same flowing convention as the strings previously established. As the music swells, strings in higher octaves join the oboe, marrying its melodic contours.

This music accompanies the first visual appearance of the spinning globe. Fireworks cease so the illumination of the globe's surfaces can pierce through the darkness; the only other light sources are green lasers in the sky and a cluster of lit torches on the ground. Color schemes project across the globe in order of blue, white, green, then red. The perceived intent of these four particular colors can be subjective. On the surface, these colors could be apparent representations of water, sky, land, and man. However, from a Western perspective, they also broadcast the three colors of the American flag and American iconography.

The score for this section wholly balances three frequently used Western music techniques. First, synthesizers and digital keyboards (Western-born instruments) often appear in scored 'space' settings; electronic instruments give listeners technologically-driven soundscapes which can aurally suggest 'unknown' or 'alien' atmospheres. Secondly, symphonic orchestral instruments such as harp, strings, and oboe are regular pillars of European and American film scores. Thirdly, the majority of the music in this section contains melodies, harmonies, and techniques rooted in Western music.

6.3.2. Life

This section begins with new instruments entering with rhythmic and percussive qualities, while long, low notes played by cellos, basses, and synthesizer drone underneath. A marimba comes to the foreground, playing repeated melodic patterns that evoke a sense of energy, curiosity, and youthfulness. A flute sounding of Native American origins interjects ornamented phrases. Violins and violas play staccato (sharp detached) pitches that mirror the marimba. Drums enter and beat out steady pulses while the music swells with melodic violins and violas in high octaves. The oboe and harp enter towards the end of this section similarly to the previous Space section, accompanied by a picked acoustic guitar.

Effort is given here to portray the 'exoticness' of older civilizations. Both the marimba and drums originated in Africa and spread to Asia and Latin America. The Native American flute is credited to the indigenous peoples of pre-Columbian North America and is descended of bone whistles, which are considered one of the oldest instruments in the world. The picked six-string guitar has Spanish roots. However, these instruments are still only given moments of independence and spotlight against a backdrop of dominating Western symphonic orchestral strings and contemporary synthesizers, all still existing in Western tonality.

6.3.3. Adventure

This music section is entirely Euro-American. Strings and woodwinds play lively melodies built on traditional European scales; brass roar dramatic American Hollywood-style fanfare themes; auxiliary percussion play energetic rhythms organized in Western beat structures. The only continuous 'world' sound is the pulsating beat of 'tribal' drums. All other music heard is composed in traditional European music structures and performed by a Western symphonic orchestra in the style of conventional American film scores.

6.3.4. Celebration

The liveliness of the Adventure music remains, but this Celebration music lowers to softer dynamic levels to elicit the sounds of ‘dances’ done by an individual or a group of people. Clear intentions are made to represent sounds of ‘others’ dancing. The pulsating marimba and drums conjure sounds of African tribal rituals. A syncopated tambourine and a spirited recorder evoke Renaissance court dances and Irish jigs. A solo melodic bass guitar conjures the stylings of popularized Reggae and Calypso music.

Although these effective—albeit clichéd—sounds do produce the effect of multiple world cultures ‘celebrating’ together, the symphonic orchestra still centers the entire section. Each ‘other’ gets their spotlighted moments, but the general consistency and transitions lie deeply rooted in Western foundation.

6.3.5. Meaning

The score’s final instrumental section is entirely Westernized, like the previous Adventure section. The music swells to a triumphant, powerful dramatic theme. All of the ‘world’ sounds have disappeared, and only the traditional symphonic orchestra remains. The melody of the upcoming “We Go On” song soars loudly with an ‘inspirational’ and almost ‘patriotic’ flair while fireworks explode rapidly.

6.4. “Part Three: Hope for the Future”

EPCOT’s official description of PART THREE is as follows:

“Comets of light race into the sky, before the globe blossoms like a lotus flower, revealing a torch ablaze with our dreams. A chorus of voices rises as the entire lagoon dances with bursts of joyous white light.”

(EPCOT 2018)

Don Dorsey (the director of IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth) wrote lyrics to Greenaway’s music, which eventually became the song “We Go On” (Mirarchi 2011). American artist Kellie Coffey sings the prerecorded vocals. The lyrics reestablish the intended message of the show: people all over the world can unite and find ‘meaning’ by become ‘one’:

With the stillness of the night there comes a time to understand
 To reach out and touch tomorrow, take the future in our hands
 We can see a new horizon built on all that we have done
 And our dreams begin another thousands circles ‘round the sun
 We go on to the joy and through the tears; we go on to discover new frontiers
 Moving on with the current of the years; we go on moving forward, now as one
 Moving on with a spirit born to run ever on with each rising sun
 To a new day, we go on.

(Greenaway 1999)

As the song plays, the spinning globe displays video projections of people of various ethnicities and cultures lighting candles. Once again, the accompaniment music is a Westernized symphonic orchestra; all of the ‘world’ instruments portraying the ‘exotic’ sounds of ‘others’ have ceased. The song is written in traditional American pop structure: verse-chorus form, even-number beats, and conventional Euro-American melodies and harmonies. English is the only sung language. A background choir joins in on the chorus singing harmonies reminiscent of American gospel music. This thoroughly Westernized finale completes the broader musical “frame” that began with the Westernized Introduction music.

7. Conclusions

The scope of *IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth* is a conflicting musical journey. Although specific sections contain clear intentions of giving representation to music of various global cultures, there is never a lack of Western musical dominance. As the score moves forward to its triumphant climax, the ‘world’ music fades away as the Euro-American music prevails. The show’s message of humanity finding meaning in ‘oneness’ infers a subliminal insinuation of finding meaning in ‘Westernness.’

While *IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth* boasts an impressively composed score by Greenaway, it still serves as another representation of Disney’s instinct to construct Western musical frameworks within its projects. Disney invites people to visit EPCOT and experience the ‘other’ parts of the world, but through a controlled perspective of familiarity, tropes, and narrow scopes. Disney’s consistent use of this framework in films and theme parks potentially gives people (particularly Americans) a false sense of awareness of both themselves and ‘others’: the Western world is the world. Connecting concepts of primitiveness with ‘world’ music and meaning with Western music perpetuates a false narrative of an evolved Euro-American world and unevolved ‘others.’

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