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Title: Movie review

The film “The red violin” is directed by Francois Girard starring Samuel L. Jackson, Sylvia chang and Carlo Cecchi as main leads. The film was released in 1998. It tells the story of a violin that is red in color passing from one owner to another for almost four centuries and five countries. The violin was made in 1681 make its way to Montreal in 1997. The film was produced by different companies from Canada, Italy and the United Kingdom that joined together to make this incredible movie. The screenplay was written by Don Mckeller. The film was shot in multiple locations in different countries such as Austria, Canada, China, UK, and Italy. The film was based on the violin which was played originally by violinist Joshua Bell. The soundtrack of the film was provided by John Corigliano. The red violin was premiered in the Venice film festival where it received many positive feedbacks and was awarded for the Best motion picture. The film grossed $ 10 million in the US box office and also won an academy award for Best Original score as well as eight Genie Awards.

The 90s cinema was an area of remake where most the producers were focused on making money by remaking Hollywood classics. However, many films explored other genres like horror and mystery. The audience was more interested in watching movies based on fiction thus giving rise to an era of fiction and mystery based films. The film red violin is a drama /suspense that revolves around an object that is a violin. The violin is red as it signifies blood. The film is a pattern of small stories that are connected by one object that is a violin. Typically, movies are made with just one story and all the characters are the same but in the case of the red violin, there are several characters each having different stories tied together by a violin. The film also depicts different cultures and different times. The director of the movie Francois's first feature film was about the portrait of great pianist however his film the red violin is a more traditional approach towards the commercial cinema as it is the blend of mystery, drama, and fiction. The narration of the story is a bit old fashioned yet it connects all the characters beautifully using tarot cards. However, the use of tarot cards in the films is not new and many films have already used this concept. As the film was shot in different locations it consists of some part of the cinema tradition of that country. The film reflects the cultures and times of every country and how it influences the characters.

The red violin is the story of a violin maker Nicolo and his wife Anna who was pregnant. Out of curiosity, she asked her servant Cesca to tell her about the future of her unborn child. However, Cesca was not able to read the tarot card for an unborn child yet she offered to read the future of Anna using tarot cards. The first card Cesca turned shows the moon that signifies a long life. It was during this time Nicolo finished making the violin and was about to varnish it when he heard that his wife and the child both died. So in his sadness, he varnished the violin using red color. The story proceeds when Cesca turned the second card that showed a hanged mean which means suffering. Now the violin was under the possession of an orphan whose name was Kaspar. Due to his love for the violin, the monks at the orphanage requested the violin teacher to teach Kaspar. However, during this time prince, Mansnsfeld was in Vienna and was looking for prodigy. Kaspar's teacher made him practice so that the prince would select him and give him some reward but during a performance, Kaspar collapsed due to extreme stress and died. His violin was buried with him but the grave thieves steal the violin and reached in the hand of a gypsy who was handsome as the Cesca third card signified. Fredrick was in love with Victoria but when she left he lost inspiration but soon was in love with another woman. When Victoria saw them she destroyed the violin out of jealousy and with that scene Cesca turned the fourth card that showed justice. Now the violin is in a possession of a Xiang a political officer. During the Chinese cultural revolution, everything “bourgeois” shall be destroyed so Xiang begged Zhou to hide the violin from the communist party officials and went on to face prosecution. Further, in the film, Cesca turned the last card which was a death card. Now the violin is in possession of Morritz. He noticed that the violin belongs to Nicolo so he sent the varnish sample to the lab. He was shocked to learn that the red varnish is blood he then arranged an auction where he sold the replica of the red violin and gifted the original violin to his daughter. In the flash, it was shown that the red color of the violin was the blood of Nicolo’s dead wife that he used to varnish the violin (Girard).

While discussing the editing of the film several stories appeared to be connected by transitioning from one frame to another. The whole focus of the film was violin so the cut in and away technique was used and the shot of the violin was taken at every instant to capture the beauty of the violin and the reaction of people around it. Another technique used in the film was dissolved technique to show the violin burning in the fire. Additionally, the iris technique was used when Morritz sent the violin for examination to show every part of the violin through the examiner's eyes. The establishing and reestablishing shot was also used in the film to show people playing the violin as well as this technique was also used during the auction when first the focus was on violin and then on the bidders. The film also had several long takes like when Fredrick was playing violin with another woman. It was during this time when Victoria caught Fredrick and used a gun to destroy the violence this scene was edited using the rhythmic technique. The flashback was shown at the end of the film where Nicolo was varnishing the violin by using the elliptical editing technique. This helped the viewers to understand how Nicolo used the blood to paint the violin red.

There were many scenes in the movie that stand out but the scene between Kaspar and his teacher was one to the most heart-wrenching scenes. Kaspar was an orphan who has an extreme interest in learning the violin. So on the monk's request, the music teacher started teaching him Violin. Many close up shots were taken that showed the motivation of learning the violin in Kaspar’s eyes. His teacher wanted him to perform in front of a prince so that they could achieve a reward. However, due to extreme stress, Kaspar collapsed while performing and died. The room where Kaspar was practicing had neutral color walls. The furniture was old. In this scene, the director utilizes natural light. The costume Kaspar and his teacher was wearing reflected the German and French culture. The main element of the scene was the violin.

Moving on towards the cinematography the quality of the film was good in terms of the background color effects. Several deep focused shots were taken specifically when Nicolo was making the violin and when he was varnishing it with blood. The depth of field shot was taken when Victoria caught Fredrick playing violin with another woman. The shot focused on Victoria and the gun in her hand. There were many zoom shots in the film for instance zoom shot was taken when the children were playing the violin and during the auction of the violin. When the violin was in Morritz possession several scenes were captured by using the following shot like when he was talking with the lab in charge about the violin the camera followed him to the lab and inside the lab as well. The film also had several close-up shots even extreme close up shots of a violin as it is the object upon which the whole movie revolves.

In any movie, sound editing is extremely important. The red violin is the film based on the violin so the sound effects are the requirements for the film especially the quality of sound. The film used tarot cards to connect each story so the diegetic sound was used in the trailer. The film uses nonsimultaneous sound effects in many instances like the sound of the violin came before Fredrick was shown playing it. While showing the flashback where Nicolo was using the blood to varnish violin sonic flashback effect was used as the voice of his wife was making him more emotional. The synchronous sound effect is used throughout the film as dialogues directly corresponded with the lip movement of the characters.

The film is not merely a story or characters rather it involves many stages like screenwriting, casting, sound, shooting, producing, editing, etc. All these elements combine to form a film.  The list does not end here as after the film the task of distributing also comes in the art of film making. The red violin is a drama/mystery film that revolves around the violin. The film shows the journey of the violin from one country to another. The film also depicts different cultures and times and how music connects them all. Talking about the sound effects and cinematography the film has incredible sound quality. As it is based on violin so the sound is indeed the most necessary element however another thing that connects the story is the use of tarot cards and the editing. As the film is composed of many short stories editing plays a key role in combining all the factors and making them appear as one.

Works Cited

Girard, François. *The Red Violin*. Niv Fichman, 1998.