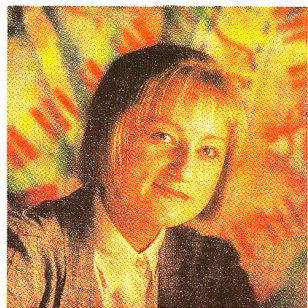


# PREMIERE



FRANK LINDNER



MUSIC EDITOR

## SUZANA PERIĆ

**F**ATE CHOSE A CRUEL way to show Suzana Perić that she was not destined to be a concert pianist. At the tender age of thirteen, in a concert hall filled with people, she got eight bars into a piece by Schumann and suddenly found that she had no idea where to go next. So she stopped and started again. "I came to the same point," she says, "and again, nothing—black. But I still didn't run from the stage. I started a third time and somehow improvised a few bars until the memory clicked back. By the time I got through it, the people were roaring and clapping, and I was in tears."

Such a humbling experience may explain why she is not the best person to ask about her own mastery of music editing. Listening to her, one could easily get the impression that her film credits (*Something Wild*, *Nadine*, *Frantic*, *Married to the Mob*, *Dead Ringers*, *Casualties of War*, *Postcards From the Edge*) are the result of just one fluke after another and that her collaborators (director Jonathan Demme, composers Ennio Morricone and Howard Shore) have been just too kind in wanting to work with her. "It's incredible!" she exclaims. "I have no idea how I've been so lucky!"

On *The Silence of the Lambs*, Perić, 37, finally had the opportunity to work with Demme and Shore together. Five years ago, Demme hired her for her first feature, *Something Wild*. With 50 songs and a score by Laurie Anderson and John Cale, the film gave Perić plenty of opportunity to show what she could do, and Demme has not made a feature without her since. She first worked with Shore on *Nadine*, and *Silence of the*

*Lambs* marks their ninth collaboration in four years. "In a recording session, she's my right hand," says Shore. "After a take, I can look at her and know if it's wrong."

"I always hoped [Demme and Shore] would work together, because they have similar sensibilities," says Perić. "They are both very unconventional and love to experiment." What they also have in common is respect for Perić's talent.

After the ill-fated recital, which was the culmination of several afternoons a week of classical-music training from the time she was seven, Perić, who is Yugoslavian, went on to study English and Italian at the University of Zagreb. Upon finishing there, she came to the United States to join her parents in Chicago, where her father was stationed with the Yugoslavian diplomatic corps, and enrolled in film school. She now lives in New York City.

On most films, the music editor not only works with the composer but is also responsible for cutting the source music and creating the temporary music track for previews. "Before I worked with Suzana," says Demme, "I never understood what a creative job music editing could be. I didn't know I could get so much help finding music and then making little tiny edits to match it to the right points in the film. Now it's one of my favorite collaborations. When you find someone as gifted as she is who is also such a wonderful person, you're a lucky director indeed."

Occasionally a director will change the picture after the score is recorded, and it will fall to the music editor to cut the composer's work. When the composer in question is movie maestro Ennio Morricone (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*), that can be an unnerving prospect. On *Frantic*, says Perić, "it took a while to build a trust. He's had some bad experiences with his music being chopped up. So I would call him from Paris and play it over the phone to him in Rome. When he okayed it, then I'd show it to [director] Roman Polanski." Morricone not only learned to trust her but also brought her along on *Casualties of War*.

The devotion she has earned from her colleagues is returned tenfold by Perić. Of Demme, she says, "If he needed the sky, I would go take the sky down for him." Of director Robert Benton (*Nadine*): "The most beautiful, wonderful person you could ever meet." Of Morricone: "I love him, whatever he does."

But turn the spotlight back to Suzana Perić, and her effusion stops. "My goodness! I've never talked about myself so much in my life!" she says—and all she's done is say nice things about everyone else.

JENNINE LANOUILLE