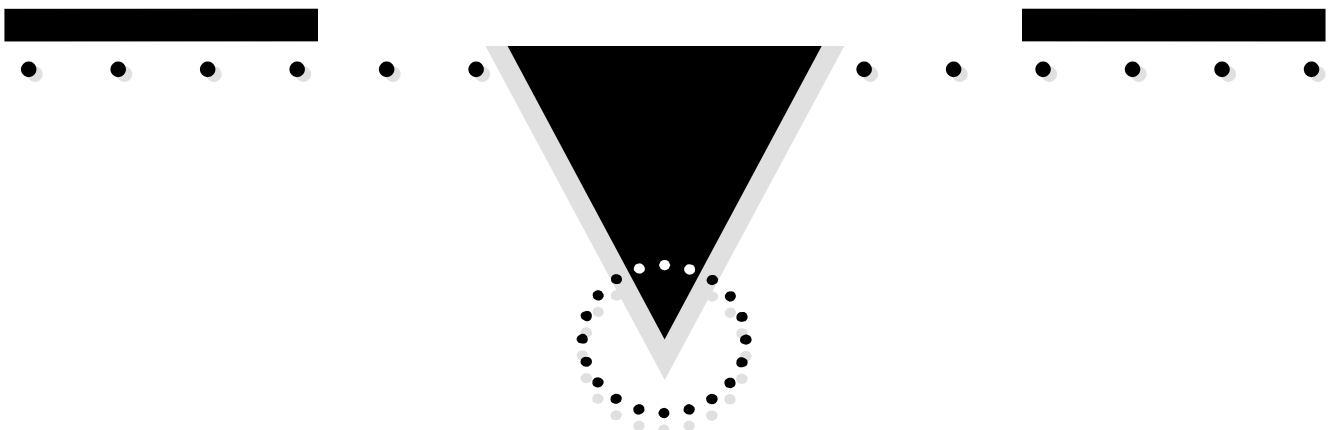# Film Music
Reference booklet.

http://www.composemusic.co.uk/resources

During this module you will be expected to…

- Understand the development of the film music industry and devices used within music to enhance the film.
- Appraise music from different eras.
- Perform a film music classic.
- Create a storyboard.
- Compose music for your storyboard.

The History of Film Music

The earliest examples of films consisted of moving pictures only and no sound. But a silent movie without a musical accompaniment seems totally empty, so music was typically provided in the theatre by anything from a single pianist to a full orchestra to give emphasis to the story. At first it was up to these theatre musicians to choose or improvise the music, but there were music publishers who specialised in producing music suitable for film which these musicians could refer to. It wasn't long before film makers exerted greater control over the musical accompaniment, by specifying the music to be played, and even in some cases having it specially written for the occasion. It is interesting to note at this point that one of the great entertainers of the silent era, Charlie Chaplin, also composed the music for some of his own films such as "**City Lights"** and **"The Gold Rush"**.

- *Listen to some early examples of music played by a pianist and compare this to the score to city lights.*

The first "Talkie"

The first "talkie" movie was the original **Jazz Singer** starring **Al Jolson** which created a stir on its release in 1927 with its soundtrack consisting of songs and some fragments of speech. This heralded a change for film and by the early 1930s, as the talkie industry matured, the role of film composer started to emerge in earnest. A pattern quickly emerged or the "opening titles" making the equivalent of a musical overture introducing the film and its main themes, and the "closing titles" which would reinforce the mood of the film's conclusion and remind us of the main themes. Within the film, there would be opportunities to provide appropriate music between the periods of dialogue. The importance of the music to the finished product was also quickly recognised, and awards were given for this contribution including the Academy Award for Best Score.

- *Watch the Jazz Singer and evaluate the choice of music for the opening scene.*

Music for cartoons

In the history of film music cartoons were seen as inferior. The pianist accompanying the picture would have to add comic runs and it took a longer time for definite scores for these pictures to be published. Initially pianists and composers followed the action too closely (as can be seen in early Micky Mouse cartoons) and this was also done in main feature films for a time. Gradually the music developed and mature scores are now used in cartoons (eg. "The Simpsons" and "Rugrats").

- *Watch an early cartoon to understand this idea of music following the action too closely – compare this to a modern animation.*

Music Borrowed

Some early examples of film music though seem to throw themes together from many sources, including numerous classical works by the likes of **Rachmaninov**, **Tchaikovsky** or **Rimski-Korsakov**. Even modern films still borrow classical works to use. An example is "2001: A Space Odyssey" directed by Stanley Kubrick (he used to watch edits of the film with a personal stereo on playing the music of Richard Strauss and he grew used to it so he rejected the score and used "Also sprach Zarathustra" and others, and rejected the music written by Max Steiner.

- *Compare the music used to the original score that was thrown away.*

The Main Titles – End Titles.

This developed early on in the film history as a type of introduction to the film. In classical terms this had been around for years and it was called the overture. The principle idea of the main titles is to set the mood. The end titles can also be similar to the main titles but this is really a chance for the composer to show off and also leave the audience with a certain feeling, ie happiness or even uneasiness. In recent years directors have chosen to end of a pop song and so also gain the possibility that the film will be advertised in the pop charts. "Robin Hood – Prince of thieves" ended on Bryan Adams' "everything I do I do it for you" and the song reached number one for many weeks, this advertised the film and achieved what the directors wanted. Mel Gibson's film "Apocalipto" ended with an uneasy yearning traditional song from the area and this leaves the listener thinking at the end. Some film directors may decide on different approaches to ending the film, this all depends on the type of film and whether they decide they would need the extra advertising. Even "The Lord of the Rings" trilology ends each film with a pop singer, but gets the original composer to compose the music and keep it within the tone of the rest of the music.

- *Compare the music at the end of a film to see if it is within keeping of the film and what feeling does this leave you with.*

The Underscore.

The underscore is within scenes and is there to create emotions and feelings that you otherwise would not pick up on by just watching the scene without music. It can also heighten the emotions in a scene.

Scene Music.

Scene music is simply music played by a device or a group within a scene, for example a car stereo playing within a car, or an orchestra playing on stage. Early on in the history of film music there never used to be underscore and so if the director wanted music within a scene to add feelings he would have a musician walking across the scene or set a pianist in the scene – this led to some ridiculous scenes.

Motif Music

A motif is a small clip of music that represents a character, feeling or an idea. Within a scene the motif is played everytime the character or idea appears. John Williams uses motifs many times in his music, for example every time superman enters the film you might hear a small fanfare type motif such as this next idea (try playing it to see if you recognize it!).

Mission Impossible
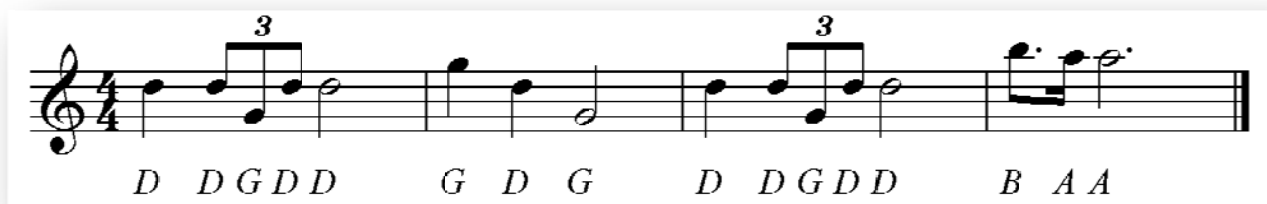
Usually films start with the main titles but sometimes it can be good to give the audience a peek at what they are about to be let in for. In mission impossible this technique is used it is called the prologue or the introduction.

Introduction (prologue) – with underscore.

This sets the scene for the film. You will hear underscore through the next short introduction. I have written down what instruments you can hear and what emotions these suggest to me. How does the music create these feelings? Follow the music through whilst watching this scene.

Time	*Sounds heard & Textures*	*Emotions*
1 sec - 20 secs	Snare drum, drum (no snare), *pan sound (left to right & back)*	Excitement! Building!
21 secs - 1 min 5 secs Kiev	Flute (flutter) triangle, bass guitar, toms, low strings, snare, wood block, percussive sounds & motifs	Tension, increased suspense.
1 min 6 secs – 1 min 43 secs	Horn (develops motif), strings (cellos take over motif), w block, flute, toms	Horn joins tension and pass tune around
1 min 44 secs – 2 min 12 secs Vandruzi	Strings, snare, horns, faster pace	hope
2 min 11 secs – 2 min 24 secs get rid of that scum	Low strings stab sounds, High strings blend into next scene,	Blends into next scene
2 min 25 secs – 2 min 55 secs Girl awakes (love interest)	High strings descend, timpani imitates heart beat and rest finally on one note.	Love interest

Main Titles (starts with toms)

The main titles put us in a good mood for the film to come. The film at this point is showing us small snippets of adventures and excitement whilst the music is echoing this. It is quite similar to the Opera or Musical when the band are playing at the beginning with the overture, they are trying to set the scene and give you a snippet of the things to come.

Scene Music

In the next scene (10 mins 17 secs) There is scene music playing. That is music which can be explained by physical objects or music making devices in the scene. Even though we are taken away from the ballroom the orchestra is still playing and producing background sound for the scenes until the underscore starts for real at 10 mins 6 secs with a flute.

Some Notable Composers.

John Williams has worked with many of the great directors, such as Stephen Spielberg, George Lucas, Ron Howard, Oliver Stone and Sydney Pollack. Apart from film music, John Williams has written music for the Olympic Games and for the concert hall. Here are some of the famous films whose soundtrack he has composed : Jaws, Indiana Jones, The star wars trilogy, Jurassic Park, Saving Private Ryan, ET, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Hook, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

Gerry Goldsmith was born in 1929 and is still composing film music. He now lives in Beverley Hills. He started his career as a typist in a film studio. His latest score is for Star Trek: Nemesis. He has written music for more films than any other composer. He first started writing for television with the Twilight Zone theme, then wrote music for Planet of the Apes, The Mummy, Mulan, Basic Instinct, Gremlins, Alien, The Omen and many more besides.

Thomas Newman was born in 1955 and lives in California. He comes from a family involved in the film industry. His father was a famous composer. He is famous for using unusual instruments in his music and likes to use percussion instruments such as vibraphones and xylophones in his music. He has written the music for American Beauty, The Green Mile, Meet Joe Black, The Horse Whisperer and the Shawshank Redemption.

Howard Shore was born in 1946 in Canada. He has recently written the music for the Lord of the Rings trilogy. His other film scores include High Fidelity, Existenz, Seven, The Client, Mrs. Doubtfire, Philadelphia and Silence of the Lambs.

James Horner was born in 1953 and lives in Los Angeles. He studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He has received many Oscars for films and has written the music to many films, including Aliens, Titanic, Enemy at the Gates, Deep Impact, The Perfect Storm, The mask of Zorro, Apollo 13 and Braveheart.

John Barry is a British film music composer from York, and has been very successful also in the USA. He had private lessons on the trumpet and piano and didn't go to university. For many years he was a professional jazz pianist, playing with the John Barry Seven. Has written music for nearly all the Bond films and also Dances with Wolves, Mercury Rising and The Specialist, Out of Africa, Born Free.

Hans Zimmer was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1957 and studied music in London. His music mixes electronic and acoustic sounds. His films include Gladiator, Rain Man, The Lion King, The Thin Red Line, Pearl Harbor, Hannibal.

Elmer Bernstein was born in 1922 in New York. He has written many big scale orchestral scores including The Great Escape and The Magnificent Seven,

Bernard Herrmann contributed more to film than any other composer, who in over forty scores enriched the work of such directors as Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, Francois Truffaut, and Martin Scorsese. From his first film (*Citizen Kane*) to his last (*Taxi Driver*), Herrmann was a master at evoking psychological nuance and dramatic tension through music, often using unheard-of instrumental combinations to suit the the dramatic needs of a film. His scores are among the most distinguished ever written, ranging from the fantastic (*Fahrenheit 451, The Day the Earth Stood Still*) to the romantic (*Obsession, The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*) to the terrifying (*Psycho*).

Some music to perform

Mission Impossible.

The composer Lalo Schifrin worked with Danny Elfman on the music for this film. It gives a sense of movement and tension because the irregular time signature that the piece is in 5/4. You will need to read up on the following terms and symbols in the Glossary.

- Trill
- Repeat bars.
- Key signatures.
- Articulation – staccato , marcarto.
- Time signatures.

The Feather Theme from Forest Gump

Alan Silvestri composed this simple theme that starts the film. He uses a repeating ostinato and in the second section he uses 6th's in harmony to create a very happy theme. To perform this piece you will need to read up in the Glossary on the following terms and symbols.

- 8va------
- Repeat bars.
- Key Signatures
- Ostinato G D D D D

The Good the Bad and the Ugly

Ennio Moricone gained much respect with this music, using choirs, sound effects, orchestra and traditional instruments for this soundtrack. You will need to read up in the Glossary for the following terms and symbols.

- Slurs
- Repeat bars.
- To Coda sign **To Coda** ⊕

The Imperial March from Star Wars

Written by John Williams using motifs and themes to represent characters or groups. This is written in a minor key and uses many chromatic notes. You will need to read up in the Glossary for the following terms and symbols.

- Key signatures.
- Chromatic notes.

Theme from "Mission Impossible"

The Feather Theme from "Forest Gump"

Theme from "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly"

Ennio Morricone

Imperial March *from "Star Wars"*

This menacing music was written by John Williams and comes into the film every time the imperial army appears. The composer uses three devices to create the menacing mood.

It was written in a MINOR key and so naturally sounds unhappy.

The melody is a DISJUNCT melody – that is a melody that jumps about, gives you a feeling of unease within this key.

The use of CHROMATIC notes – that is notes that are foreign to the key signature, this adds to the tension.

Glossary

- Underscore :
  - Background music to a scene in a film. The music is usually not very interesting because it mustn't overpower the action on the screen.
- Opening and Closing Credits :
  - This is where the film music can be heard in full. Usually all the sections of the film music are brought together for the credits.
- Leitmotif or Motif:
  - A tune that represents a certain character in the film.
- Dissonance :
  - This is when notes clash with each other, such as when you play C and C# together. The effect is usually quite scary.
- Consonance :
  - This is when notes harmonise well, like the notes C E G played together. It is used to create peaceful or love scenes.
- Glissando :
  - When one note slides to another either upwards or downwards.
- Ostinato :
  - *G D D   D D* A repeated pattern of notes or a rhythm that is repeated over and over again.
- Synchronising :
  - This is when the music is electronically synchronised with the action on the screen.
- Slurs two notes are tied together thus their duration combines, in this example the notes would last for 5 crotchet beats.
- To Coda sign **To Coda** ⊕ When you get to a sigh that says DC al Coda, or DS al Coda or similar then you repeat back to either the beginning (if DC) or back to the sign (if DS) and when you arrive at the to Coda sign then you jump to the coda at the end. Coda simply means an ending.
- Major key :
  - This usually has a happy and optimistic sound to it.
- Minor key :
  - This has a sad sound generally.
- Conjunct melody :
  - This is a tune that has notes close to each other, and is used for catchy, memorable tunes.
- Disjunct melody :
  - This is a tune that has notes that leap around from high to low notes and is used for fear, excitement and generally tunes that give the feeling of uneasiness.
- Chromaticism :
  - This is a tune that uses very close notes that aren't part of the key. It is used for feelings of tension and anxiety.

- Trill *tr*〰〰 (when two notes are played rapidly after each other for the duration of the note).
- Repeat bars. The music between these dotted bars are to be repeated.
- Key signatures. The accidentals within the key signature make every note in the music played with that accidental unless a natural or some other sign is used.
- Articulation – staccato notes are played short, marcarto – notes are played marked (a rather hard attack).
- Time signatures. $\frac{5}{4}$ The top number tells us how many beats are in each bar, the bottom number tells us what type of beat are within each bar. 4 is a crotchet beat and 8 is a quaver beat.
- 8va------ This sign means the performer must play the marked passage 8 notes (an octave) higher than written.

- *Cue Sheet :*

  - This is a sheet of paper with times on it and action so that the film composer is able to compose music to the sections. Here is a sample of part of a cue sheet

Time	Action	Music ideas
0,00-0,13	Murderer seen creeping to victim	Violins play very quiet long note. Very quiet brush used on cymbals
0,14-0,28	Victim sees murderer before he strikes and struggles with him	Sudden 3 clashing notes played sustained on the piano loudly. Loud ostinato on cellos and violins Xylophone disjunct melody
0,29-0,37	Knife is turned towards murderer and it slowly approaches his throat	Low note on cellos followed by loud glissando on high violins 4 times until
0,38-0,45	Camera focusses on murderer's eyes as knife enters	Very low sustained note. Drum beats 3 times at death
0,46– 0,52	Knife is dropped as he is horrified what he has just done	Plucked violin notes fade out.

Using words from the glossary describe how you would compose music for the following themes.

Love

War

Fear

Aliens

Draw a cue sheet for a 45 second scene, and write what you would do in the music to make the scene musically interesting. Look at the example in the glossary to help you. Make sure you use proper musical vocabulary.

Time	Action	Music ideas

Now create a film music story board of the above cue sheet using descriptions, music, pictures and then try to perform this to the class.

Some Ideas to help you compose!

When trying to create fear ......

- Clashing notes such as C and C# create a scary atmosphere.
- Slow moving notes played on low instruments.
- Sudden chords using clashing notes played loudly.
- Silences work well to increase tension.
- Instruments played in unusual ways, such as guitar strings played lightly with a drumstick or the inside of a piano played with the fingers, or a drum skin being stretched while it is played work very well.

An excellent example is Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho", the shower scene is seen as brilliant as you don't see the knife stab the lady but the music tells us this and builds our fear. Bernard Herrmann wrote the music for this film and many of Alfred Hitchcock's films.

When trying to create love........

- Choose some chords like C E G, and play them together using your instruments. Try playing the chord upwards, downwards or all the way up or down on your instruments.
- Try using two or more chords, but try to keep it simple.
- Try playing very simple tunes while another member of your group is playing chords.
- Try playing short solos using slow moving tunes.
- Avoid using clashing chords or anything to make the audience jump!

If you watch the film, "When Harry Met Sally" you will hear classic examples of simple music with simple basic chords and simple melodies.

When trying to create war........

- Avoid using loud drums all the way through, it will be boring!
- Build up your music bit by bit. Start with a steady beat, then add a rhythm to this, then another and so on.
- Don't be loud all the way through. Build your music up slowly.
- Think about adding an OSTINATO part on a low piano, or keyboard or xylophone

"Gladiator" is an excellent example of a war film, the battle scenes build and use the same material but do not bore us. Hans Zimmer wrote the music but based the battle music on Holst's "Mars – The Bringer of War" from his Planets Suite – Listen to both and discuss how he has changed the theme and what he has kept.

When trying to create alien or strange music.........

- Create mystery by playing slow single notes on a synthesiser.
- Try to use long, sustained sounds to create the impression of space.
- A lot of science fiction film music uses voices singing sustained *aaah* or *mmmm* sounds. Try it!

When you want the emotions or feelings to change make sure to try to synchronise your music to the images. This can be very difficult but with practise it gets better. Improvise ideas under the film clips and see if they work, if not rewind the film clip and improvise something else until it sounds right – then write it down or record it.

"Forbidden Planet" uses many strange sounds and eerie effects within the music, listen to a clip and discuss how the composer Louis Barron creates feelings of uneasiness.

Film Music Storyboard

1. Draw your scenes for your film using a previous cue sheet.
2. Write a brief description of what is happening.
3. Improvise sounds or music that would fit, (refer to the glossary for ideas).
4. Practise and perform your film music.

Clip 1 Length ....

Clip 2 Length ....

Clip 3 Length ....

Clip 4 Length ....

Description of action

Description of action

Description of action

Description of action

Clip 1 Length ....

Clip 2 Length ....

Clip 3 Length ....

Clip 4 Length ....

Description of action

Description of action

Description of action

Description of action

Film Evaluation

Name _____ **Class** _____ **Form** _____

In this module you should have

1. Created a film storyboard   Your level [   ]

2. Practised and performed film music   Your level [   ]

3. Composed music for your storyboard.   Your level [   ]

4. Listened and discussed examples of film music   Your level [   ]

Write a short synopsis of you film storyboard.

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What did you enjoy doing and what do you think could have been improved or included?

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