

MUSIC SCORING GUIDELINES

For SCA Production Classes

(CTPR 310, 508, 480, 486, 546, 547 and CMPP (Stark) 541)

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/COMPOSER

AGREEMENT shared with the USC School of Cinematic Arts, PRODUCTION DIVISION, and the Thornton School of Music, SCORING FOR MOTION PICTURES AND TELEVISION

Respect for each discipline is our strength for a successful interdisciplinary collaboration.

Because of the limited number of composers and SCA resources, entry-level projects CTPR 290/507 are not supported by this agreement. First semester Production students should not contact SMPTV composers. Any 290/507 students engaging a composer will forfeit a composer and the use of the Spielberg Scoring Stage the following semester.

1. HOW DO I FIND A COMPOSER FOR MY FILM

- **THE SMPTV WEB SITE** – Thornton's scoring program (SMPTV) has a website <http://www.smptv.net> containing the 20 composers' bios and recent examples of their work. TAKE THE TIME TO LISTEN TO AND REVIEW THE PROFILES OF ALL THESE COMPOSERS – IN SOME CASES, A COMPOSER YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE MAY HAVE ANOTHER PROJECT OR COMMITMENT. All filmmakers should use this as the first step to finding a composer for your film. Student films are learning experiences and it's never too early to contact a composer! In the industry, some composers are under contract years in advance of production.

- **Contact (no more than two) composers to reveal and discuss the magic of your story.** Give the composers a chance

to respond to your script. Don't be afraid to say: "I don't know." The composer is there to help and will search to find the musical idea that works for you. Don't worry about finding a composer who has not previously scored a movie in the exact style you want for your film. Film composers are usually more versatile than people realize!

- **It is unacceptable for directors to ask potential composers to audition for the opportunity to score your film by having them write a piece of music, or demo score/mock-up for your film!** Instead, take what you can from your initial meetings to establish trust through a clear line of communication. As soon as possible, make your choice of composer and immediately thank the other maestro for spending precious time with you.

- **DIRECTOR/COMPOSER PITCH MEETINGS – Each semester, there are usually two meetings set up between the filmmakers and composers.** The dates will be announced in your production classes. All in session classes must be respected! If you can't attend the meeting, contact the composer of choice and set up an introduction soon as possible. **DON'T GET LEFT OUT! THESE MEETINGS ARE ALSO POSTED ON THE SMPTV PROGRAM CALENDAR OF CLASSES & events; webcal://ical.me.com/bking12358/SMPTV.ics**

2. THE CONTRACT AGREEMENT –

- **After you have decided, sign the two party Director/Composer Contract to complete your agreement. Communicate your emotional ideas to your composer. Show a scene representing the mood of your film and ask for a (short) mock-up based on the emotion you want for the subtext of your film.** It doesn't take many notes to get an idea of the melody or color you are seeking. Keep it simple! Student films are usually too short to establish more than one theme that can be developed for your story.

- **Communication is the most important discipline a director can contribute to the composer.** *(Temp tracks are OK, as long as you're clear about the choice(s) for your temporary music. What is it about the temp track that you like – is it the energy and pace (rhythm and tempo), the overall music design (large orchestra vs. solo voice, or*

electronic sounds with a small string orchestra, jazz group featuring a lead trumpet, etc.) or the temp track hits the mark for the emotional core of the scene or story – be clear about the reason(s) for your temp track) Is there a composer or a previous film score that represents the suspense you desire? Always keep in mind how you want the audience to feel. For instance, I hear a music box for this scene or I hear syncopation with low strings. This gives your composer an opportunity to react and perhaps come up with exactly what you're looking for. By no means can any temp music be used in the Final Mix unless previously cleared prior to the mix.

3. **THE SPOTTING SESSION** – The success in every Director/Composer collaboration starts with agreement concerning where the music is placed! There will be a simple “Spotting Notes” form introduced that will include Starts: -- Ends: plus a section for additional Comments. All “spotting” sessions must include a copy for the producer, director and composer. A courtesy copy to the Sound Designer may help avoid conflicts of sounds in an action sequence. This professional practice is used internationally regarding film music. Occasionally a composer may want to start a cue slightly early or end a little longer but NEVER change the agreed to spotting notes for starts and stops.
4. **SHOW AND TELL** – WITHIN 2–3 DAYS OF “SPOTTING” THE DIRECTOR IS TO SCHEDULE MEETING(S) TO REVIEW THE INITIAL WORK WITH THE COMPOSER. In this way you'll get to work closely with the composer, through the process, to ensure that you get precisely what you want from the composer's score for your film.
5. **REWRITES** – Almost every student film score will require some kind of rewrite. Some cues will need a minor tweak but if more than a third of the score is being significantly rewritten, a communication breakdown has occurred. Time to look for a different approach to getting your ideas understood. Success is when music supports the emotional needs of the picture.
 - **No director or producer can request a last minute change of spotting or tone just prior to scoring or mix down.**
 - **The occasional practice of composers forcing their will and writing wall-to-wall music is unacceptable!**

- **There is far more work for a composer than just writing a score!** The time for composing is often less than half of the entire scoring schedule. The rest of the time is spent developing the material, orchestrating, editing and mixing. If live musicians are used, a substantial amount of time is spent recruiting players and creating printed parts for the musicians.

6. **HOW TO SCHEDULE A RECORDING SESSION – SCA Sound Department Manager Rich Hyland, created a procedure for reserving a recording and mix down session in the Spielberg Scoring Stage.** Your instructor will supply this information. *(This is the current policy and is under review).*

THE INTEGRITY AND COLLABORATION OF BOTH SCHOOLS MUST BE PROTECTED AT ALL TIMES– Keep in mind that all student film projects are extra-curricular for the composers. They are donating their time and talent in attempt to enhance your film project. This collaboration continues to grow, based on mutual respect and appreciation for one another. The scoring program offers free composing, orchestration, conducting, and time spent mixing down your score. Please respect the enormous added emotion the maestros bring to our films.