

Knowledge organiser AoS4: Film Music

Key ideas and concepts

Orchestral instruments

1. Purpose	Music in a film is there to set the scene, enhance the mood, and tell the audience things that the visuals cannot, or manipulate their feelings. Sound effects are not music!	1. Strings, bowed. Highest to lowest	Violin, viola, cello, double bass. Can also be played pizzicato.
2. Specially composed music	Some music is composed especially for a film. Much of this is broadly classical in style.	2. Strings, plucked. Highest to lowest	Harp (has very wide range), guitar, bass guitar.
3. Borrowed music	Some music used in film soundtracks was composed for other (non-film) purposes, but is adopted for use in a film because it fits the film-maker's intentions.	3. Woodwind. Highest to lowest.	Piccolo, flute, clarinet, oboe, cor anglais, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon.
4. Theme songs	Sometimes a song, usually a pop song, is used as a theme song for a film. This helps with marketing and publicity.	4. Brass, highest to lowest	Trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba.
5. Video game music	Music for video games fulfils a very similar function to that of film music	5. Tuned percussion, metal	Glockenspiel, celesta, vibraphone, tubular bells.
		6. Tuned percussion, wooden	Xylophone, marimba.
		7. Tuned drums	Timpani

Key terms

1. Click track	A click metronome heard by musicians through headphones as they record.	8. Untuned percussion, hit	Tam-tam (gong), snare drum, bass drum, triangle, castanets, woodblock
2. Cues	The parts of the film that require music. This is agreed between the director and the composer.	9. Untuned percussion, shaken	Maracas, tambourine

Harmony and tonality

3. Diegetic	Music that is part of the action: the characters in the film can hear it.	1. Atonal	Not in a key. Often sounds dissonant.
4. Leitmotif	A short melody that is associated with a character or idea in a film.	2. Consonant	Not clashy. Sounds 'nice'.
5. Mickey mousing	When the music fits precisely with a specific part of the action in a film.	3. Dissonant	Clashy.
6. Non-diegetic	Music that is not part of the action: the characters in the film cannot hear it. It is just for the audience.	4. Major and minor	The key: generally, major keys sound happy and minor keys sad.
7. Syncing, sync point	A precise moment where the timing of the music needs to fit with the action.	5. Pedal note	A held note under or over the rest of the music.

Dynamics, expression, articulation

Pitch and melody		1. Accent	A note that is louder than the ones surrounding it.
1. Arpeggio, broken chord	Going up or down the notes of a chord one at a time. Ascending or descending.	2. Crescendo	Getting louder .
2. Chromatic scale	Going up or down by one semitone at a time.	3. Diminuendo	Getting softer.
3. Conjunct and disjunct	Moving up or down by step (conjunct) or by leap (disjunct).	4. Glissando	A very quick scale, played as fast as possible.
4. Interval	The distance from one note to the next. Second, third, fourth, fifth, octave etc.	5. Harmonics	A soft note with a distinctive tone played on a stringed instrument by stopping the string lightly.
5. Ostinato	A repeating pattern. Can also be a rhythm.	6. Muted	A dampened sound on a brass or stringed instrument made by using a mute.
6. Scalic	Moving up or down in a scale pattern.	7. Legato	Played smoothly.
7. Sequence	A small pattern repeated up or down in pitch.	8. Pitch bend	When the player smoothly changes pitch, literally 'bending' the note.
8. Octave	The interval of an 8th.	9. Pizzicato	When a violin, viola, cello or double bass is plucked (not bowed).

Rhythm and metre

1. Cross rhythm	Where conflicting rhythms are played together, for example triplets against pairs of quavers.	10. Staccato	Short, detached notes.
2. Even rhythm	Where the notes are of an equal length.	Texture	
3. Polyrhythm	Many rhythms played together.	1. Antiphonal	Alternating.
4. Syncopation	Off the beat.	2. Call & response	Question and answer.
5. Uneven rhythm	Dotted rhythm. Alternating long and short notes. Creates a skipping effect.	3. Homophonic	Chords, or melody & chords.
		5. Monophonic	A single melody, no harmony.
		6. Polyphonic	Many independent lines.

