

| AoS4: Film Music | | | |
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| Key ideas and concepts | | Orchestral instruments | |
| 1. Purpose | Music in a film is there to set the scene, enhance the mood, 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 specially for a film. Much of this is broadly classical in style. | 2. Strings, plucked. Highest to lowest | Harp (has a 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, French 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. |
| Key terms | | 6. Tuned percussion, metal | Xylophone, marimba. |
| | | 7. Tuned drums | Timpani. |
| 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. |
| 3. Diegetic | Music that is part of the action : the characters in the film can hear it. | Harmony and tonality | |
| 4. Leitmotif | A short melody that is associated with a character or an idea in a film. | 1. Atonal | Not in a key . Often sounds dissonant. |
| 5. Mickey mousing | When the music fits precisely with a specific part of action in a film. | 2. Consonant | Not clashy . Sounds 'nice'. |
| 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. | 3. Dissonant | Clashy . |
| 7. Syncing, sync point | A precise moment where the timing of the music needs to fit with the action. | 4. Major and minor | The key : generally, major keys sound happy and minor keys sad. |
| 8. Underscore | Where music is played at the same time as action or dialogue. | 5. Pedal note | A held note under or over the rest of the music. |
| Pitch and melody | | Dynamics, expression, articulation | |
| 1. Arpeggio, broken chord | Going up or down all the notes of a chord one at a time, ascending or descending . | 1. Accent | A note that is louder than the ones surrounding it. |
| 2. Chromatic scale | Going up or down by one semitone at a time . | 2. Crescendo | Getting louder . |
| 3. Conjunct and disjunct | Moving up or down by step (conjunct) or by leap (disjunct). | 3. Diminuendo | Getting softer . |
| 4. Interval | The distance from one note to the next : 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, octave, etc. | 4. Glissando | A very quick scale , played as fast as possible. |
| 5. Ostinato | A repeating pattern . Can also be a rhythm. | 5. Harmonics | A soft note with a distinctive tone played on a stringed instrument by stopping the string lightly. |
| 6. Scalic | Moving up or down in a scale pattern . | 6. Muted | A dampened sound on a brass or stringed instrument made by using a |
| 7. Sequence | A small pattern repeated up or down in pitch. | 7. Legato | Played smoothly. |
| 8. Octave | The interval of an 8th . | 8. Pitch bend | Either loud or soft . No crescendos or diminuendos. |
| Rhythm and metre | | 9. Pizzicato | In three sections: A B A . |
| 1. Cross rhythm | Where conflicting rhythms are played together , for example triplets against pairs of quavers. | 10. Staccato | Alternating quickly between two adjacent |
| 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 and response | Question and answer . |
| 5. Uneven rhythm | Dotted rhythm . Alternating long and short notes. Creates a skipping effect. | 3. Homophonic | Chords , or a melody & chords |
| | | 4. Monophonic | A single melody , no harmony. |
| | | 5. Polyphonic | Many independent lines . |