

## MASTER IN SCORING FOR FILM, TELEVISION AND VIDEO GAMES - COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

### FS-510 Advanced Scoring I: Narrative Analysis

In this course, student composers master the processes that lead to effective musical storytelling and allow them to collaborate fully with creators of visual media. Underscoring is as much a matter of dramaturgy as compositional technique, and the two will be integrated through extensive analysis of works, including seminal film/score syntheses as well as current state-of-the-art examples. Students learn to read the dramatic intent of the film; form a viable musical approach; spot the film incisively; develop the appropriate harmonic vocabulary and instrumental palette; determine musical function, and lay out the score itself. Students will analyze entire film and television projects, and explore a diverse range of eras, genres, dramatic and musical concepts, musical vocabularies, styles, and orchestrational approaches.

The first element of the core curriculum leading to the masters thesis, FS-510 is taken in tandem with FS-530, **Directed Studies in Linear and Interactive Scoring**, as the compositional theory component of a theory + practice pairing.

### FS-520 Advanced Scoring II: Genre and Form

In this course, students become familiar with the musical requirements and expectations of a wide range of cinematic categories and forms, from classic genre film to episodic television comedy and drama to documentary and opinion/propaganda pieces. The conventions of genre are now an established part of every composer's vocabulary. They can be violated, subverted, or updated, but they must first be mastered. Areas of study include the following:

- comedy, both feature and episodic, including comedic montage and timing
- classic drama, including death of principal character, abandonment, and triumph
- action and suspense, including the chase, natural catastrophe, cloak and dagger, and sports
- period drama, including devices to establish time and place
- romance, including development of the romantic theme, and technique for leading to the moment of the kiss
- science fiction, fantasy, alien worlds, alternate realities, supernatural events
- horror, stalking, assault and murder
- reality TV, including the use of sound design and synthetic non-melodic patterns
- classic TV and feature-length documentary, as well as persuasive or propagandistic

As a focused continuation of Advanced Scoring I, students will further strengthen skills in scene analysis, character reading, psychological persuasion and enchantment (esp. with respect to lowering threshold of belief in sci-fi and fantasy). Genre scoring also allows composers to explore more deeply their own emotional and psychological processes in order to produce scores that support content in all varieties of visual media, including interactive experiences. Taken in tandem with FS-531, **Directed Studies in Linear and Interactive Scoring 2** as the second phase of a theory + practice sequence.

## **FS-530 Directed Studies in Linear and Interactive Scoring 1**

An advanced practicum that provides individual students mentoring in scoring a range of visual media projects and introduces them to the one-to-one filmmaker→composer collaborative model. With active support and critical appraisal from senior faculty and professional advisors, students are challenged to conceptualize and execute a plan for scoring a variety of projects, both narrative and non-narrative, linear and non-linear, that reflect the current diversity of global visual media.

Drawing on both previously acquired music skills and scoring techniques learned in the co-requisite **Advanced Scoring I: Narrative Analysis**, students will demonstrate the ability to convey creative intentions, respond to critical direction, and work intensively to meet deadlines set in tandem with their faculty advisor. Scoring assignments will be drawn from a balanced representation of linear and non-linear visual content selected by faculty in collaboration with the student, utilizing electronic scoring techniques and/or live-player scoring sessions with students functioning as composer/conductor, or composer/producer.

## **FS-531 Directed Studies in Linear and Interactive Scoring 2**

The second semester continuation of the advanced practicum course that provides students individual supervision in scoring a range of visual media with attention to aesthetic, dramatic, and technical considerations. Taken in tandem with FS-520 **Advanced Scoring II: Genre and Form**, projects will focus on genre and type-specific applications of visual scoring craft.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to: 1. Communicate their creative ideas to a collaborator/director; 2. Evaluate the varying musical needs of visual media content; 3. Develop a concept for scoring linear and non-linear visual content; 4. Create and apply original material as the thematic and aesthetic basis of a partial or complete score for a film, television show, and/or video game; 5. Produce and deliver music assignments to the level of professional standards.

## **FS-615 Video Game Scoring Techniques**

As the third component of the first semester core, this course treats the craft of scoring for interactive media as a specialized application within the broader field of visual music, rather than an entirely separate career path. Most accomplished game composers will assert that game scoring *is* film scoring, and draws upon the same skill set. While methodology, terminology, and software/middleware can differ substantially from linear scoring, the end goal remains an exciting and immersive musical experience. In this course, students work extensively with the application of technology across multiple genres to compose and apply fundamental video game compositional methods to projects of various types. Students will write simple to moderate-level interactive scores, employing the most widely used methods in the industry and comparing notes with working game composers as a regular part of classroom/lab activity. In addition, business issues related to the video game and interactive industries, including contracts, licensing, toolsets, and job opportunities, will be discussed. The course is phase one of a two-course sequence and is a foundation for the Advanced Video Game Scoring course, which involves the creation of more advanced and complex interactive scores with direct application of middleware technologies. Composers will team up with game designers at peer institutions and private companies for projects.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to: 1. Evaluate and critique interactive music; 2. Compose music in the three most common methods used in video game composition (branching, layering, cross-fading); 3. Create a professional-quality demo reel for use in the video game industry 4. Compare the different technology applications for video game composition including middleware and other formats, and be able to write for these applications 5. Estimate, schedule and direct a video game music project from start to finish 6. Brainstorm new interactive forms for video games.

## **FS-623 Advanced Video Games Scoring and Implementation**

This advanced course builds on the techniques learned in FS-615. Students explore complex interactive scoring techniques and direct application of middleware technologies (Wwise and Fmod). Students focus on advanced interactive composition techniques including designing and composing thematic elements and motifs that work across multiple cues. Students also master advanced recording techniques and session flow for video game music. The aim is to prepare students for entry-level work at a game development company or as freelance game music professionals through immersion in version control technologies, sound design and editing, batch file conversions, and modern approaches to scoring to video games. Additionally, students explore advanced topics in the video game and interactive industries including contracts, licensing, toolsets, and job opportunities.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to: 1. Compose advanced interactive scores using thematic elements to unify a game across multiple cues; 2. Synthesize the theory, mechanisms and approaches to writing music for games; 3. Evaluate audio middleware for its limitations that inform creative decisions about building an interactive score 4. Create an Audio Design Document for a game; 5. Implement a score using audio middleware; 6. Synthesize strategies to work with and market to game developers; 7. Create advanced bids including creative direction, scheduling, and budgets in order to get jobs; 8. Construct an interactive demo reel for a website

## **FS-619 Master Film Composers**

During the relatively short history of the cinema, a handful of inventive composers have had an outsized impact on the language of film scoring all students must master if they wish to practice the craft. Just as an art student might study Rembrandt to learn how to use light or Hopper to master photorealism, aspiring film composers can save themselves many painful steps by “going to school” on the greats. In each offering of this course, students will examine at close range the work and career of a selection of seminal figures in film scoring history. By studying their contributions to film music vocabulary, as well as the trajectory of their careers, students will gain valuable lessons in the art and profession of film scoring.

The course will focus on three aspects of film scoring that are often overlooked in the study of film music:

1. Students will study complete scores and the collaborative processes from which they emerged, with particular emphasis on the filmmaker-composer relationship. Archival records of historical composers and interviews with living composers will shed light on these areas.
2. Students will explore how a single composer develops his or her voice, technique, and unique sonic signature through the course of a career. This is an extremely valuable perspective for the budding composer, who also must find and develop his or her own voice.
3. Students will focus on what a film scoring career looks like—its perils and pitfalls as well as its peaks. This is of great practical use to the student readying to enter the field.

## **FS-617 Conducting to Visuals**

This course provides an advanced tutorial in the technique and challenge of conducting live music for film, television, and video games. Students master baton technique, podium protocol, orchestral etiquette, and studio time management, as well as the specialized requirements of conducting music for visual media. Tools mastered include conducting to punches and streamers; conducting to fixed and variable click; conducting live players in conjunction with prelay; technical considerations of using Auricle and/or Digital Performer; cueing players; conducting vocal ensembles in conjunction with orchestral ensembles; and the historical development of synchronizing live musicians with picture. Students will have the frequent opportunity to conduct live ensembles with real-time instructor guidance.

## **FS-621 Advanced Dramatic Orchestration**

Almost from the beginning, motion pictures demanded a highly imaginative application of the orchestrator's art, including both extended techniques and an expanded palette. This course provides both an extensive survey and intensive practice of the techniques of dramatic orchestration, from Wagner through the most current hybrid scores, in light of how they developed in response to dramatic needs as opposed to concert requirements. The integration of electronics, unconventional instruments, and "sound design" elements into contemporary orchestration will be examined. Beginning from simple piano pieces, lead sheets, and sketches, students will produce both section arrangements (e.g., for brass quintet, woodwind octet, etc.) and full orchestrations. These can then be mocked up for virtual ensembles prior to working with the live soloists, duos, trios, etc. whose performances will either affirm the student's choices or send him/her back to the drawing board.

Issues of style, size, and color stemming from differences in orchestration for television, film, and video games will be examined, as well as arranging for small and unusual ensembles, making orchestration decisions from an incomplete sketch, advanced overdubbing techniques combining sequence and live instruments, and considerations in use of modal, non-equal tempered, and microtonal instruments in conjunction with orchestra. Students will also review the historical development of film orchestration from the 1930's to the present.

## **FS-625 Music Supervision and Editing**

Music Supervision and Editing are different crafts requiring, in most respects, very different skill sets. What good supervisors and editors do have in common is a keen ability to read a motion picture and graph its music needs in response to directorial intent and studio/producer targets. What is the appropriate musical texture? What songs and diegetic (source) material will best establish period, place, culture and character? Which temp cues will provide the best road map for the composer who ultimately steps in? Up to this point, the supervisor and editor are aiming at a common target, even if from very different angles.

This course provides students a comprehensive look at career paths in music supervision and editing for motion pictures, television, and video productions, with an in-depth examination of the job responsibilities of each. Students explore the aesthetic and technical aspects of spotting, selecting, clearing, cutting, licensing and dubbing a wide range of music. Soundtrack design concepts, including placement and integration of songs and source music, branding of the film through association of signature artists, and navigating the often turbulent waters between filmmaker and studio are explored. Ancillary and auxiliary composer functions, such as preparation for pre-records and on-set playbacks, conforming MIDI tracks, and preparing click tracks & picture cueing for scoring are the subject of exercises. Finally, a working command of Digidesign's ProTools, the industry standard for audio editing and mixing, as well as recording, will be a learning outcome for all students.

## **FS-540 Business and Entrepreneurial Seminar**

In this course, students master business management and entrepreneurial skills for the media composer, with special focus on the challenges of self-promotion, sole proprietorship, and “package production” that are a feature of this craft. Students learn business development strategies, including sales generation, networking, cold calling, reels, websites, upselling and utilization of social networks. Ancillary aspects of running a small business, including accounting, taxation and finance, employee management, insurance, retirement and benefit planning are addressed. Business models, including limited liability corporations (LLC’s), and partnerships are explored and compared. Work-for-Hire and All-In Package contracts will be deconstructed and negotiated in role-playing exercises. The exigencies of scheduling, time management, and meeting of deadlines and delivery requirements will be examined in real-world contexts. Life management, professional ethics, and building of social skills will receive special focus. Students will deliver oral presentations and prepare business plans. Throughout the course, self-evaluation and peer-evaluation will be a feature.

## **FS-695 Culminating Experience in Scoring for Film, Television and Video Games**

Masters of Music—Scoring for Film, Television and Video Games students are required to complete a culminating or “capstone” experience, similar in some ways to the practicum or residency required of students in the sciences. The tangible product of this experience, and the evidence that the student has earned his or her degree, is the master’s thesis. A thesis, in the broadest sense, is a statement of intellectual conviction that offers a new and distinctive answer to some existing question or problem. In the vast majority of visual media projects, the “problems” are of a dramatic nature, e.g., how to tell the story more effectively, how to engage the audience more fully, or how to scare the pants off them. The practitioner of music for the screen, whether a composer, orchestrator, supervisor, or editor is charged with applying his or her hard-earned skills collaboratively to the solution of such problems, and an acceptable thesis project will aim to do this and be able to articulate its methodology.

In the majority of cases, the thesis project will be a fully realized original score (or portion thereof) for, say, a short narrative film, documentary, television project, or videogame. The end goal of the culminating experience is the live recording of this score with a professional ensemble and crew and in an industry-standard setting. This work then becomes the key item in the graduating student’s portfolio, accompanied by other tracks, both classwork and freelance that flesh out the composer’s style and voice. Not every student, however, shares the same professional goals, and many variations are acceptable as long as they meet the thesis criteria and are approved by the student’s thesis advisor. The thesis project will be delivered at the conclusion of the summer mini-semester that marks the end of the program.

The student will work in consultation with his/her faculty advisor and/or the program director to develop his/her unique project. A thesis committee composed of the advisor and two other faculty will evaluate the results. This faculty team will serve as the examining committee.

It is Berklee’s intention that the culminating experience take place in a media center and in a milieu that is rich in opportunities for professional networking, mentoring, and extended learning experience. We understand that the majority of graduates will seek to go directly to work in the field of visual music, whether in world media centers or in their home countries. Hence, professional internships will be provided for all students, as will career assistance.