

MUSICAL CONTEXTS

www.musicalcontexts.co.uk

TRIED AND TESTED MUSIC RESOURCES - WRITTEN BY A TEACHER FOR TEACHERS

The Musical Contexts GCSE Music Study and Revision Guide for

Film Music

Designed to support:

Eduqas GCSE Music – Area of Study 3: Film Music

OCR GCSE Music – Area of Study 4: Film Music

Pearson Edexcel GCSE Music – Area of Study: Music for Stage and Screen



The Purpose of Film Music

Film Music is a type of **DESCRIPTIVE MUSIC** that represents a mood, story, scene or character through music; it is designed to support the action and emotions of the film on screen. Film music serves many different purposes including:

1. To create or enhance a mood

2. To function as a **LEITMOTIF**

3. To link one scene to another providing continuity

4. To emphasise a gesture (known as **MICKEY-MOUSING**)

5. To give added commercial impetus

6. To provide unexpected juxtaposition or to provide irony

7. To illustrate geographic location or historical period

8. To influence the pacing of a scene

1. To create or enhance a mood

Music aids (and is sometimes essential to effect) the suspension of our disbelief: film attempts to convince us that what we are seeing is really happening and music can help break down any resistance we might have. It can also comment directly on the film, telling us how to respond to the action. Music can also enhance a dramatic effect: the appearance of a monster in a horror film, for example, rarely occurs without a thunderous chord! Sound effects (like explosions and gunfire) can be incorporated into the film soundtrack to create a feeling of action and emotion, particularly in war films. It's also often the composer's job to create a feeling of something being there that's not on screen. Horror or Science Fiction films are often set in strange places – maybe even another planet! Film music composers need to “transport the audience” to a weird reality, where nothing is quite what you'd expect!

Frequent effects used by film music composers to create or enhance a mood include:

- A repeated **OSTINATO** pattern often to show action and tension (doesn't always have to be on a percussion instrument) *e.g. Vertigo, The Exorcist, Apollo 13, Atonement.*
- **TREMOLO** strings
- The use of **SILENCE** before something dramatic (to make you jump!)
- Unusual harmonies such as the use of minor and **DISSONANT HARMONY** or **CHROMATIC CHORDS, DISCHORDS** and **DIMINISHED CHORDS**. Semitones are used in conjunction with other unexpected intervals *e.g. in Jaws, Psycho.*
- **IRREGULAR TIME SIGNATURES/METRES** to create unease *e.g. Mission Impossible (5/4)*
- **INTERRUPTED CADENCES** create a sense of tension and suspense
- The use of the **TRITONE** (Interval of an Augmented 4th)
- **IMITATION** – a form of musical copying
- The use of **PEDAL NOTES** – long, held or repeated notes often in the bass line *e.g. Chariots of Fire.*
- The use of unusual (often electronic) instruments *e.g. Rózsa's use of the Theremin in his soundtrack to Alfred Hitchcock's thriller 'Spellbound' (1945)*
- **FANFARES** in military and war films and to show patriotism and heroism – using mainly the notes of the triad (C, E & G) *e.g. Saving Private Ryan, 20th Century Fox Fanfare.*
- The interval of an **ASCENDING FIFTH** to show optimism and heroism (John Williams often starts his melodies with a **RISING FIFTH** *e.g. Superman, Star Wars*)
- **FALLING INTERVALS** to show sadness (a musical 'sigh') *e.g. Schindler's List or 'The Sigh Motif' from the Theme from 'Psycho'*
- **ASCENDING GLISSANDO** to show fear, particularly effective on high-pitch strings *e.g. 'A Dark Knife' from Lord of the Rings.*
- **SYNCOPIATION** to show violence and unease often using short, **SYNCOPIATED RHYTHMS** to create tension and fear *e.g. Psycho, Jaws.*
- **REGULAR RHYTHMS** often used for romance – simple patterns, steady beats and balanced phrases *e.g. 'My Heart Will Go On' from Titanic, 'Now We Are Free' from Gladiator.*
- **TRUMPETS** and **SNARE DRUMS** for military, patriotic and heroic films/scenes *e.g. Apollo 13, Superman, Indiana Jones.*
- **VIOLINS** and **STRINGS** often used for romance or sadness *e.g. Schindler's List.*
- **VOCALS** – often with religious connotations or cult associations or hymns *e.g. The Omen, 'A Knife in the Dark' from Lord of the Rings*
- **SOLO PIANO** – often used for nostalgic or eerie scenes *e.g. The Piano, American Beauty.*
- **ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENTS** – synthesisers (synth) often used in Sci-Fi films to create 'other worldly' atmospheres *e.g. Blade Runner, The Shining.*
- The use of effects such as **REVERB** or **DISTORTION** applied to electronic, synthesised or sampled sounds to change and manipulate the sound.

Imitation
Tremolo
Dissonance
Fanfare
Electronic
Syncopation
Glissando
Interval
Irregular
Metre
Pedal
Chromatic
Tritone
Ostinato



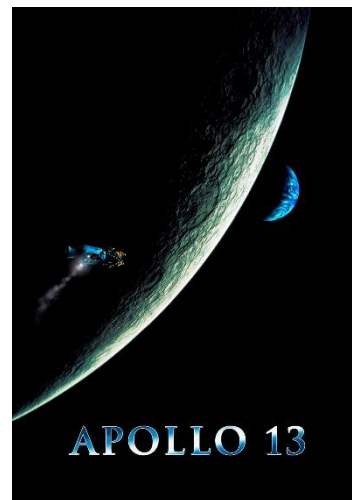
Apollo 13 Rocket Launch Scene (1)

- Watch the "Rocket Launch Scene" from Apollo 13 **WITHOUT AUDIO**. What do you think is happening? Sum up the scene in three bullet points.
- How would you describe the mood/atmosphere?
- What would you **EXPECT** to hear in the music for this scene?



Apollo 13 Rocket Launch Scene (2)

- Now watch the "Rocket Launch Scene" from Apollo 13 **WITH AUDIO**. How does the composer use **RHYTHM** to reflect the mood/atmosphere?
- How does the composer use **SONORITY** (sounds and instruments) to reflect the mood/atmosphere?
- How does the music enhance the experience of watching the clip?



Theme from Schindler's List

- Identify the solo instrument: French Horn, Violin or Electric Guitar?
- Identify the accompanying instrument(s): Brass, Harp or Percussion?
- Explain two ways in which the composer achieves the mood and atmosphere of **SORROW** and **REFLECTION**.



Theme from James Bond

- Identify the solo instrument: Trombone, Clarinet or Electric Guitar?
- Identify the accompanying instrument(s): Brass, Piano or Percussion?
- Explain two ways in which the composer achieves the mood and atmosphere of **ACTION** and **EXCITEMENT**.



Theme from Jaws

- Identify the solo instrument: French Horn, Viola or Saxophone?
- Identify the accompanying instrument(s): Brass, Harpsichord or Percussion?
- Explain two ways in which the composer achieves the mood and atmosphere of **SUSPENSE**.

Tonality
 Harmony
 Rhythm Texture Pitch
 Dynamics Tempo
 Instrumentation
 Melody
 Sonority

2. To Function as a LEITMOTIF

LEITMOTIF

A frequently recurring short melodic or harmonic idea which is associated with a character, event, concept, idea, object or situation which can be used directly or indirectly to remind us of one not actually present on screen.



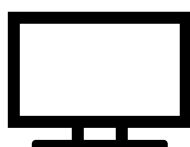
LEITMOTIFS can be altered and developed but must be recognisable. They can undergo considerable **THEMATIC AND HARMONIC TRANSFORMATION** such as:


- SEQUENCING** – repeating the leitmotif rising in pitch (if this rises by **SEMITONES** this is called **CHROMATIC SEQUENCING** and is a device often used to create tension and suspense in soundtracks to horror films or action sequences in thrillers).
- REPETITION** – repeating the leitmotif “as is” – but too many repetitions and it will become boring!
- Vary the **TONALITY**, being performed in a different key – **TRANSPOSITION**.
- Change the **INSTRUMENTATION** depending on the contexts within the **VISUAL NARRATIVE**.
- Add or subtract from the idea (making it longer or shorter – **FRAGMENTATION**).
- Using **INVERSION** (upside down), **RETROGRADE** (backwards), **AUGMENTATION** (doubling the note values) or **DIMINUTION** (halving the note values)
- Vary the **TEXTURE**.
- Extend or reduce the **INTERVALS** between notes (**INTERVALLIC EXPANSION/DIMINUTION**)

Sometimes the **LEITMOTIF** can give you a hint as to what will happen later in the film *e.g. if a character turns out to be a “bad guy” as in Star Wars Episode I – ‘The Phantom Menace’ (1999) where Anakin (who is “good” in this film) will later become Darth Vader.*

Sometimes just the rhythm of the **LEITMOTIF** is played in the background – it might be so quiet it’s hardly noticeable but adds to the drama and provides a “subtle hint” to the viewer/listener.


Often at the end of a film, there’s a triumphant **MODULATION** of the main theme or **LEITMOTIF** (if the film has a happy ending!) It ends in a happy, uplifting key (normally **MAJOR**) with a drawn-out **CADENCE** to show the story of the film has been resolved. If the film doesn’t have a happy ending (or if there’s going to be a sequel), the main theme or **LEITMOTIF** may be left unresolved, giving the film a more open or darker ending.






Indiana Jones Leitmotif

- What word describes the repeated brass pattern before the melody comes in?
- What instruments play the main leitmotif?
- Is the tonality major or minor?
- Why do you think John Williams made these musical decisions to represent the character of Indiana Jones?



Harry Potter Leitmotif

- How would you describe the texture at the start?
- What instrument plays the main leitmotif?
- Give two differences between the original presentation of the leitmotif and the second time you hear it.
- What mood/atmosphere does the music help to create?



Jaws Leitmotif

- How does the composer develop the leitmotif?
- Give two ways in which the theme helps to create tension and anticipation.
- What word describes the repeated pattern that is heard throughout the opening?

3. To link one scene to another or smooth over visual cuts, providing continuity

Repeated sections of music can be used to link different parts of the film together – it can remind you of something that happened earlier in the film. **REPETITION** can also be used to create tension and suspense – a repeated sequence that’s getting louder (**SEQUENCING** or **CHROMATIC SEQUENCING**) can create a dramatic effect.

The style of music can also change within a film with different sections of the film having different moods *e.g.* a love scene might involve a “love theme” using strings and woodwind instruments, a humorous scene may have a more playful and light-hearted mood and battle scenes, where the mood is more tense and dramatic, may use low pitch brass instruments.

Film scores can be **MONOTHEMATIC** where the entire film score is based upon a single melody *e.g.* David Raksin’s “Laura” (1944). “Laura’s ‘Theme’” is heard so often, and in so many different circumstances, that it comes to “haunt the listener”. Raksin avoids the possibility of this becoming “boring” to the listener through the melody’s unusual line and associated jazz-based extended harmonies and by never stating the theme in its entirety. “Laura’s ‘Theme’” is also used **DIEGETICALLY** throughout the film – on a gramophone, in a restaurant played by an instrumental group of violin, accordion and piano and at a party in a version for dance band – all helping to provide continuity to the film as a whole.





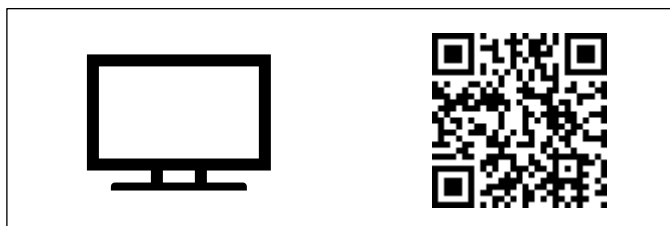
Theme from "Laura" - David Raksin

- How does the music "build up" within the first minute?
- Which word best describes the harmony of "Laura's Theme"? Major, Minor, Chromatic or Modal?
- How does David Raksin change and vary "Laura's Theme" to prevent it becoming too repetitive or boring?



4. To emphasise a gesture (known as **MICKEY-MOUSING**)

MICKEY-MOUSING is used especially in animated films/cartoons and comedy films and is where the music mimics every small movement reinforcing or illustrating the action *e.g. sliding trombones as characters journey up and down in a lift, an ascending chromatic scale as a character goes up stairs*. Timing is especially crucial when using **MICKEY-MOUSING** and film music composers often use **CLICK TRACKS** to help time their music/sounds so that they occur exactly at the right place to match the on-screen action (which isn't always "on the beat!")



5. To give added commercial impetus

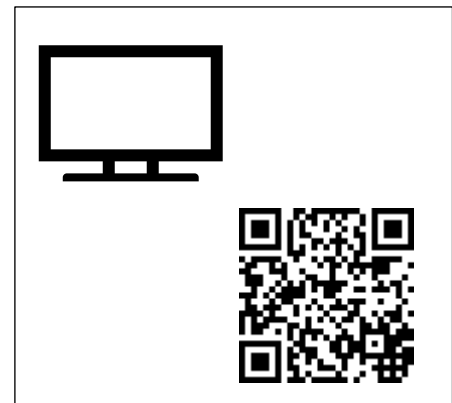
An increasingly important aspect of film composition, but one that has been present since the first sound film, is the independent commercial 'afterlife' of the score. Sometimes a producer will require a 'hit' song to help sell the picture and increase its overall profit, often using it over the opening or closing credits. A song might be used as the title track but can return in the background later – like a **LEITMOTIF**. The song "My Heart Will Go On" by Celine Dion occurs many times in the film 'Titanic' (1997). Sometimes the popular song doesn't appear anywhere else in the film – "Rule the World" is only heard over the closing credits in 'Stardust'. These songs aren't always the same style of music as the rest of the film, but they're released in the charts to generate publicity. They're often performed by famous popstars and pop groups *e.g. Take That's song "Rule the World" from the film 'Stardust' (2007)*.

The popular success of a score may not always have been planned by the composer; this was the case with David Raksin's *Laura*, which was transformed into a hugely successful 'hit' song; but there are many examples of deliberate attempts at building a score around a 'hit' song. Such an approach was very much the case in all the James Bond films and *'Titanic' (1997)* and big Hollywood films have often exploited theme music to help advertise the film and add commercial impetus.



6. To provide unexpected juxtaposition or to provide irony

This is when a film music composer uses either a pre-existing piece of music or song, or creates their own and uses it within a film in a setting which the listener wouldn't normally expect to hear it *e.g. in the torture scene in 'Reservoir Dogs' (1992), Stealer's Wheel's "Stuck in the Middle with You" is heard and Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" is heard in the 'Dracula' (1931) film*. Using music which the listener/viewer wouldn't normally expect to hear can create a sense of uneasiness, comparison or even humour!



7. To illustrate geographic location (place) or historical period (time)

Film music can be used to create the mood of a different time or place, such as Westerns, which often use music "from the time" to set the scene using traditional instruments. Films set in a different country often combine traditional instruments "associated with a particular country" in their soundtracks to help the audience imagine the film's setting and give a sense of "place" *e.g. the Sitar can help "place a film" in India or the Bagpipes help "place a film" in Scotland*. Films set in a particular historical period *e.g. the 1970's or 1980's*, may use pop songs from the time to set the scene with the audience recognising the songs and reminding them of that particular decade.



8. To influence the pacing of a scene (making it appear faster/slower or more comprehensive)

Film music composers often use fast, dramatic music in action sequences to “drive the action and pace” forward. Similarly, in love or romantic scenes, a slow, sweeping theme on strings can be used to “slow down the pace” of the scene.



List at least three 'hit' songs that have added to the commercial success of a film. Give the song title as well as the band/artist/composer and the name of the film.

Which musical instruments, timbres or sonorities could you use to "place" a film in the following countries or geographic locations?
China, Australia, Brazil, Ireland, The Sahara Desert, The Antarctic.

Which musical instruments, timbres or sonorities and types of music could you use to help "place" a film in the following historical periods?
Knights riding into battle, Ancient Egypt, Medieval monks in a monastery, At the Court of Queen Elizabeth I.

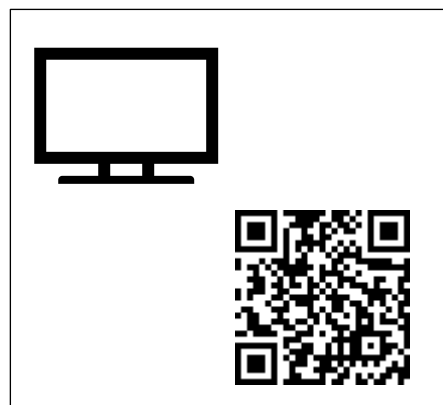


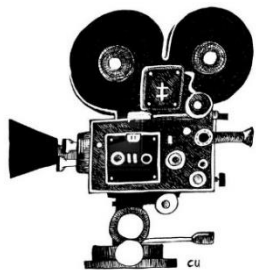
Can you remember how a **LEITMOTIF** can be changed through both thematic and harmonic transformation?

Create your own definition of the term **SEQUENCING (CHROMATIC SEQUENCING)**.



Leitmotif
Sequencing
Monothematic
Mickey-Mousing
Soundtrack
Modulation
Repetition





A Short History of Film Music

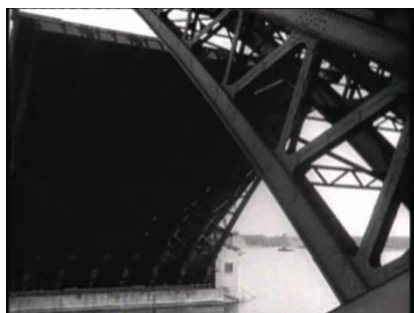
Early films were in black and white and had no sound and were often called “**SILENT CINEMA**”, although they were never in fact “silent” since music was often used to cover noisy projection machinery. A musical accompaniment was instead provided by a pianist (on a “cottage piano”), an organist or sometimes a whole orchestra.

The first film to have live music was shown in Paris in 1895 with a live screening of Louis Lumière’s film *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (shown right). Lumière himself, for example, advertised that a saxophone quartet would accompany a film presentation at his theatre in Paris in 1897, so it wasn’t just a “cottage piano” that would provide the music.



As time went on, cinema orchestras large and small provided considerable enjoyment for musicians, so much so that this was one of the reasons for the rise of the cinema organ in the 1920’s (shown left) by means of which “orchestral” sounds could be produced by just one performer!

To begin with, the music was often **IMPROVISED** but the typical method of providing a musical accompaniment was to compile a score from **EXISTING CONCERT, OPERATIC AND BALLET MUSIC** from the Western Classical Tradition. This was due to both saving cost and the fact that the music of the Romantic Period in the nineteenth century, such as the operas and music-dramas of both **WAGNER** (and his **LEITMOTIFS** within his music-dramas) and **VERDI**, were already **PROGRAMMATIC** and **DESCRIPTIVE** in nature – perfect for use as film music. Collections of **MOOD MUSIC** were created – we still use these today in advertising and television.



Not all early film music was compiled from existing scores, however, and it was the ‘silent’ era which in fact witnessed the birth of the film composer proper. Though Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) was the first famous composer to have written a score for a film (*The Assassination of the Duc de Guise*, 1908), it was the German composer Edmund Meisel (1874-1930), who was one of the first to realize that music should not simply be a background element or mere purveyor of general ‘mood’.

Working with film director Sergei Eisenstein, Meisel realised in his music for *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1927), that music had to be integrated with the film, and so he composed a score specifically to interact with the images. Following Meisel, in the 1910’s and 1920’s, composers started writing their own original scores for films. Films with sound (originally known as “talkies”, were introduced in the 1920’s. The first full-length, commercially successful “talkie” was *The Jazz Singer* (1927) which contained an instrumental score, sound effects, dialogue and singing. About a decade later, “talkies” had almost completely replaced silent film.



In the 1950’s, recordings of film music were made commercially available. These became known as **SOUNDTRACKS**. Today, all mainstream films are released with a **SOUNDTRACK** on CD or digital download, and film music composers have the potential to become very wealthy and famous.

Origins of Film Music


What purpose did music have with the invention of moving pictures?
 What purpose did it have?
 Which genres of music were used?

First Films with sound

Describe the technological developments that now allowed music to be recorded with moving pictures. Give examples of the first films produced in this way.

Modern Day Film Music

How does it compare with early film music?
 How has it moved on?
 Use the musical elements to help you here.






The Purpose of Film Music

Why do we have film music at all?
 Are there any extrinsic reasons why we have film music e.g. commercial reasons?



Famous Film Music composers

List at least three composers who've written some of the most iconic film scores of all time.
 Give their famous sound tracks as well as some of their career achievements.



The Funny Barber Scene

- What music has been used as the starting point for this film music?
- Why do you think the composer Meredith Wilson used some pre-existing music?
- How does the music reflect the action in the scene?

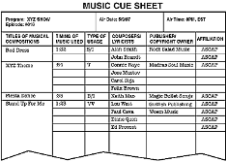


Charlie Chaplin and The Lion's Cage

- How has mickey-mousing been used in the music?
- What instruments have been used to represent the lion? Why?
- What other musical devices are used in the soundtrack?

Raising of the Bridges from "October"

- What is the name given to the device where the theme is repeated ascending by a semitone each time?
- How does this create a sense of tension and suspense?

MUSIC SPOTTING	CUE SHEET	STORYBOARD	CLICK TRACK
Where the director of the film and/or musical supervisor or COMMISSIONED composer decides where music is to feature in the finished film i.e. how much music and when.	A planning tool used by film music composers containing accurate timings (shown in seconds and fractions of a section) of all dialogue and action and musical CUES (indication of music needed) which could be music, background music or sound effects. 	A STORYBOARD is a graphic organizer in the form of illustrations or images displayed in sequence for the purpose of pre-visualizing a motion picture, animation, motion graphic or video game sequence 	A click track is an electronic metronome which facilitates the accurate synchronisation of music to e vents often used in cartoons and animated films where accurate timing of events and music (MICKEY-MOUSING) is critical. 

Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Film Music

DIEGETIC FILM MUSIC

Sometimes filmmakers want to include music within the story for the characters (as well as the audience) to hear – this is **DIEGETIC MUSIC**.

DIEGETIC MUSIC originates from something on screen e.g. a car radio, a band in a nightclub or sound effects such as guns in the distance or screeching car breaks. **DIEGETIC MUSIC** is also known as **SOURCE MUSIC** or **IN-VISION MUSIC**.

NON-DIEGETIC FILM MUSIC

In most films, the music is **NON-DIEGETIC** – it's not actually part of the story and is put "over the top" of the action to increase the effect of the film and for the audience's benefit and which the characters within the film can't hear e.g. music to accompany a car chase or to highlight the emotions of a conversation between two characters. **NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC** is also known as **UNDERScore** or **INCIDENTAL MUSIC**.

DIEGETIC and **NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC** can be used together within a film e.g. a particular theme or song can be used as **NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC** being heard 'by the audience' through a particular scene and then a character within the film could switch on a radio and the same theme can be heard. Now being listened to by the actual characters in the film, the music becomes **DIEGETIC MUSIC**.



The following images show some examples of **DIEGETIC FILM MUSIC**, can you think of any other examples?





Minimalist Techniques in Film Music

Music

Minimalism is a modern style, first popular in the 1960's. This style features **REPETITION** based on small **CELLS** which evolve very gradually. The piece gradually transforms adding a hypnotic effect to the music. Minimalism is good for building up a general mood or atmosphere, but less successful at describing action on-screen. Some techniques used in minimalist music for films include:

METAMORPHOSIS - Tiny changes are made over time to one note or to one part of the rhythm. This can go a "full circle" and end up exactly the same at the end.

Ostinato patterns gradually changing over time.



Notice how the patterns gradually move away from the original harmonies and then return.
In most bars only one note is changed.

ADDITIVE MELODY - Adding notes to an original melodic cell gradually.



Additive melody - one extra quaver added to the pattern each time

ISORHYTHMIC OVERLAP (RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT) – Combining different length ostinato patterns (also called **RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT**)



Combining different length ostinato patterns

Here the 2 patterns are together again.


PHASE SHIFTING – When two or more motifs or cells begin in unison and gradually become “out of time” with each other through displacement, either forwards or backwards (rotation).

POLYRHYTHMS – More than one rhythm being performed simultaneously – sometimes in different metres creating a thick **POLYRHYTHMIC** and complex musical texture often called a **CONTRAPUNTAL TEXTURE**.




Minimalist music has often been used in the soundtracks and music for the genre of horror films. Why do you think minimalist music is suitable for this genre?






The Hours by Philip Glass

- What instruments, timbres and sonorities can you hear?
- Describe that the instruments are doing.
- What minimalist techniques are used in this music?
- How is the atmosphere built up as the music progresses?



The Exorcist by Mike Oldfield

- What instruments, timbres and sonorities can you hear?
- Describe that the instruments are doing.
- What minimalist techniques are used in this music?



Koyaanisquatsi by Philip Glass

- What types of timbres and sonorities can you hear performing the opening motifs?
- What effect does this constant repetition of motifs have on the mood and atmosphere created by this piece?
- What types of timbres and sonorities are added towards the end of the extract?



Video Game Music

In many modern video games, music is an important element of gameplay in much the same way as in a film. Video game music is the **SOUNDTRACK** that accompanies video games.

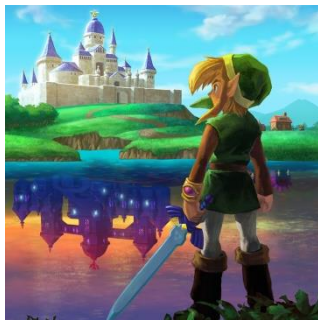


Early video game music (that is, video games that were made in the 1970s or before that) was extremely primitive in terms of sound that was played during the game and consisted primarily of **SOUND EFFECTS**, **CHIPTUNES** (a style of music which used simple melodies) and early sound **SYNTHESIZER** technology (*shown left*). This was because the primary way of storing music and other audio at the time was on a compact cassette or record. These were relatively

fragile and under frequent use these were prone to breaking.

In the mid-1980s, musical **SAMPLING** began being used; meaning that pre-recorded sound was played during the game, making it more realistic and less “synthetic-sounding”. However this was very expensive and the previous electronic sound effects, chiptunes and synthesizer technology were still used most often. During the mid to late-1980’s, consoles were commonly using ten channels for producing music and it was now also available to play in **STEREO** format, rather than **MONO** for a more authentic sound. **SAMPLING** continued to be used, as well as ADSR effects (commonly found in synthesizers) and even speech for increased realism.





Video game music started becoming a recognised style or genre of music, not only being used for **CUES** in games, but actually using **THEMES** and scores with many different parts to create a musically pleasing sound. **THEME** tunes from video game music such as *The Legend of Zelda (1986)* and *Super Mario Bros (1985)* appeared which are still very well-known. Video game music was more fun to listen to and could affect the mood and style of the game and was also important in knowing when a significant event was about to occur.

With advances in technology, video game music has now grown to the same extent as film scores, allowing for much more creative freedom. While simple **SYNTHESIZER** pieces are still common, video game music now includes full orchestral pieces and popular music. In 1997, Michael Giacchino (b.1967) wrote the score for *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* – the first video game to use a live orchestra. He has gone on to compose orchestral scores for many more video games, including a number set in World War II, such as *Medal of Honour (1999)* and *Call of Duty (2003)*.

Modern day video game music has become increasingly often **FULLY ORCHESTRATED** and whilst technology is used in their creation, they often use less technology in their performance. The composer uses the computer to create the score; it is then played by an orchestra and then digitally converted and integrated into the game.

Music in video games can be heard over a game's title screen, options menu, and bonus content, as well as during the entire gameplay. Today's soundtracks can also change depending on a player's actions or situation, such as indicating missed actions in rhythm games.

Often the main character and other characters can have their own **THEMES** (like leitmotifs in film music). Video game music composers often manipulate, alter and change these "character themes" adapting the elements of music – **ORCHESTRATION, TIMBRE, SONORITY, TEXTURE, PITCH, DYNAMICS** - depending on the character's situation or different places that they travel to within the game.



The popularity of video game music has expanded education and job opportunities, generated awards, and allowed video game soundtracks to be commercially sold and performed in concert. Even some radio stations (*Classic FM*) now feature entire shows dedicated to video game music.

Famous composers of video game music and their soundtracks include:



Koji Kondo

Super Mario Bros. (1985)
The Legend of Zelda (1986)



Michael Giacchino

The Lost World: Jurassic Park (1997)
Medal of Honour (1999)
Call of Duty (2003)



Mieko Ishikawa

Dragon Slayer (1993)



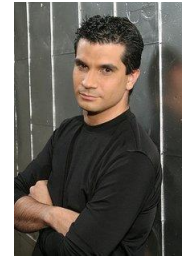
**Martin O'Donnell and
Michael Salvatori**

Halo (2002)



Jesper Kyd

Assassin's Creed (2007)



Tommy Tallarico

Assassin's Creed (2007)



Daniel Rosenfield

Minecraft (2011)



Rom di Prisco

Fortnite (2017)



Nobuo Uematsu

Final Fantasy Game Series



Aurora Theme from The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim - Jeremy Soule

- How does the first 38 seconds of music create a feeling of suspense and tension?
- What instruments, sounds and sonorities can you hear during this extract?
- What musical devices used in film music can you identify in this piece of video game music?



Overture: Lore from The Last Guardian - Takeshi Furukawa

- How would you describe the texture of this piece of video game music?
- What solo instrument can you hear performing chords during the opening?
- How would you describe the harmony from around 2 minutes onwards? What effect does this create on the listener/player?



Theme from Final Fantasy - Nobuo Uematsu

- How would you describe the length of the musical phrases in this theme?
- Which word best describes the tonality of this piece? Major, Minor, Chromatic or Modal?
- Which percussion instruments can you hear playing with the orchestra?



Film Music in Westerns

Westerns are set in 19th-century North America and generally tell a simple story and can often be dramatic and violent. Many Westerns are produced with epic production values – the vast desert landscapes, large casts of American Indians, cavalry or bandits and often a hero with a mission.



Many composers creating film music for Westerns use music **from the time** to “set the scene” using “traditional instruments”. Identify/name the following musical instruments:



ORCHESTRATION/INSTRUMENTATION/TIMBRE & SONORITY – Film music in Westerns often makes heavy use of **BRASS** and **PERCUSSION** instruments including trumpet **FANFARES** and drums with their military connection. Traditional North American instruments are often used to help illustrate the geographic location of the film such as those shown above.

RHYTHM – Film music composers of Westerns often use **SYNCOPIATION** in both the melody and accompaniment often creating **CROSS-RHYTHMS**. Sometimes an **OSTINATO** is used, often performed on Indian Drums, perhaps to represent help illustrate the pattern of horses hooves or the rhythms of traditional “American Square Dances”, Tangos and Boleros are used to give a “folk feel” to the music.

DURATION – Often short notes are contrasted against long, held notes, to help illustrate the vast open North American plains.

MELODY – Often features a **BIG THEME** frequently played on high pitch strings accompanied by brass and woodwind with a traditional “folk” feel or a dance-like melody influenced by traditions such as the American Square Dance, again helping to illustrate geographic location and historical period. Elmer Bernstein’s **BIG THEME** from *The Magnificent Seven (1960)* is so memorable that it has been used whenever the “Wild West” needs to be hinted at, whether by film producers, commercial advertisers, rock bands or even in an episode of *The Simpsons* cartoon series!

QUESTION AND ANSWER PHRASES are often used “by association” to represent Good vs. Evil; Cowboys vs. Indians.

TEXTURE – Thick, dense blocks of orchestral sound are frequently used, contrasted with more **HOMOPHONIC MELODY AND ACCOMPANIMENT** sections depending on the on-screen action.

HARMONY & TONALITY – Western film soundtracks are frequently in the major key with minor tonality being used for effects, often villains! **SEVENTH CHORDS** are used frequently to create harmonic richness as well as using the chord of the flattened seventh degree of the scale.

“The Big Theme” from ‘The Magnificent Seven’ (1960) – Elmer Bernstein

Melody

SYNCOPIATED Rhythms in Accompaniment

Use of SEVENTH CHORDS

Mainly PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V) – MAJOR TONALITY

MAJOR TONALITY (E flat Major)

Accomp

f

E^b A^b maj⁷ B^b E^b A^b maj⁷ B^b E^b A^b maj⁷ B^b E^b A^b maj⁷ B^b

mf

Sweeping HIGH PITCH Strings melody, long phrases and notes of LONG DURATION

mf

HOMOPHONIC MELODY AND ACCOMPANIMENT TEXTURE

D^b

Use of the CHORD OF THE FLATTENED SEVENTH DEGREE

“The Big Theme” from ‘The Big Country’ (1958) – Jerome Moross



MAJOR TONALITY (D Major) Use of the **CHORD OF THE FLATTENED SEVENTH DEGREE**

Balanced 4-bar phrases - **ANTECEDENT** **CONSEQUENT.**

SYNCOPIATED Rhythms Use of **SEVENTH CHORDS** Mainly **PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V⁷) – MAJOR TONALITY**

“Main Motif” from ‘The Good, The Bad and The Ugly’ (1966) – Ennio Morricone (b. 1928)

This film is an epic western where the tale of three bounty hunters is set against the backdrop of the American Civil War. The main **MOTIF** is the score is made up almost entirely of rising and falling perfect fourths (A-D-A-D-A). The motif occurs with slight alternations in three versions, as if each phrase represents one of the three characters, before it concludes with a fourth, balancing phrase. We first hear it during the opening credits, and each phrase is scored differently (whistling, vocalising and tuned percussion) to further differentiate “the good”, “the bad” and “the ugly” and the phrases reappear throughout the film when one particular character is foregrounded. The main **MOTIF** is accompanied by a regular **OSTINATO** performed on an Indian Drum.



QUESTION AND ANSWER PHRASES “within” each phrase Q (Antecedent) & A (Consequent)

Mainly **PRIMARY CHORDS (I, IV & V) – MINOR TONALITY** Use of the **CHORD OF THE FLATTENED SEVENTH DEGREE**

PHRASE 1 – “The Good” (whistling) **PHRASE 2 – “The Bad” (vocalising)**

PHRASE 3 – “The Ugly” (tuned percussion) **PHRASE 4 – “Balancing Phrase”**



Theme from The Magnificent Seven - Elmer Bernstein

- The mood of this music is rousing and heroic. How does the composer create this mood?
- Describe the dynamics at the opening.
- What musical term best describes the tonality of this music?
- Describe the rhythm of the accompaniment.
- Which musical term best describes the texture of this music?
- Which family of instruments plays the 'big theme'?



Theme from The Good, The Bad and The Ugly - Ennio Morricone

- What instrument is played throughout?
- Describe the metre of this music.
- What musical device is used in the drum part in the first section?
- Describe how balanced musical phrases are used in the theme.



Film Music in Horror Films

These films are designed to take us out of the real world and play on our worst nightmares. They utilise the power of fear to create environment, catalysing our imaginations with special effects and fantastic visions. Not surprisingly, the soundtrack, combining music and sound effects, makes a critical contribution to the film's ability to produce the required audience reaction.

HARMONY – CONSONANCE vs. **DISSONANCE** = good vs. evil. Chords are often **AMBIGUOUS** – minor/major or **CHROMATIC CHORDS**. Dissonant harmony often used using notes that are a semitone apart.

MELODY – often uses the **CHROMATIC SCALE** moving in **SEMITONES** to create “creepy” atmospheres and effects. “Sigh motif” often used – rise and fall of a melody.

RHYTHM – uses **OSTINATOS** for tension and suspense of off-beat irregular rhythms to create unease.

ORCHESTRATION/INSTRUMENTATION – traditional orchestral instruments often used but played in extreme ways to create terrifying **TIMBRES**.

THEMES & MOTIFS often used to represent characters or situations but often **FRAGMENTED** and **DISTORTED** as the film progresses matching the deteriorating state of the hero/heroine.

“Theme” from ‘Psycho’ (1960) – Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975)



sff = Sforzando – to be played very suddenly loud. Extreme dynamics from the outset!

Offbeat, Syncopated rhythms create a “jagged” effect adding to the tension and suspense

Continually changing **DYNAMICS** add to the effect of unrest and uneasiness

Further use of **CHROMATIC CHORDS**

CHROMATIC CHORD (neither major nor minor – “ambiguous”) B flat + D flat + F + A Has been described as “The Hitchcock Chord”

> = ACCENT (To give more or sudden emphasis when playing)



Shortly after the opening “Hitchcock Chords”, we hear the “Psycho Theme” (shown below).

The “rise and fall” of this melody has been called the “**SIGH MOTIF**”, here the **ANTECEDANT** phrase..

..and here the **CONSEQUENT** phrase

Continuously changing **DYNAMICS**

More **CHROMATIC HARMONY**

One of the most celebrated musical moments of Bernard Herrmann’s score is the *slasher music* which has subsequently become a motif used by film composers in many “slasher movies”. In the film, this features an infamous “murder in the shower” scene as Norman, dressed as his mother, brutally stabs a young woman. The “slasher theme” is played by extremely high pitch violins where the players “slash” the bow against the strings aggressively producing a unique harsh-sounding **TIMBRE**.

Opening of "Slasher Theme" from 'Psycho' (1960) – Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975)

Extreme **HIGH PITCH**

Melody descends in pitch to match life "seeping out of the body" on screen!

Use of E flat against E natural to produce **DISSONANCE**

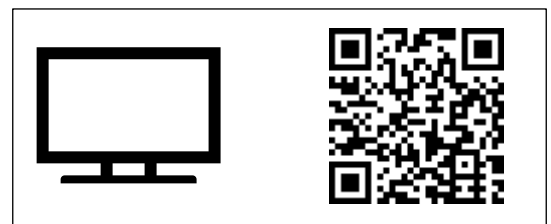
Ending of "Slasher Theme" from 'Psycho' (1960) – Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975)

More **CHROMATIC HARMONY**

Bass line continues to descend in (very low) pitch to match the on screen visual narrative

"33% of the effect of Psycho is due to its music" – Alfred Hitchcock

Bernard Herrmann’s music from the film Psycho has been compiled into a **SUITE** – a collection of the music used within the film and often performed by orchestras during concerts as a ‘stand-alone’ piece of music out of its original context within the film. Watch and listen to “Psycho Suite” now, performed as part of the BBC Proms where you’ll hear all the themes described above.



Semitones
 Ambiguous
 Sforzando
 Consequent
 Accent
 Dynamics
 Antecedent

Phrase
 Distortion
 Chromatic
 Ostinatos
 Fragmentation
 Dissonance



Film Music in Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Magical Films

MELODY - The interval of a **FIFTH** has often been used by film music composers of this genre, since its “bare, open” and “sparse” sound quality creates the atmosphere of the openness of “Space”. John Williams often uses the interval of an ascending fifth to begin many of his famous film themes.

INSTRUMENTATION – heavy use of brass (trumpet **FANFARES**), strings and percussion are often used or instruments with specific **SONORITIES** (e.g. the **CELESTA** in the ‘Harry Potter’ them) associated with Sci-Fi/Magic and Fantasy.

Composers often combine **TRADITIONAL** and **ELECTRONIC** instruments or sounds and use **SOUND EFFECTS** for additional effect.

DYNAMICS - often feature **CRESCENDOS** (e.g. Theme from “2001: A Space Odyssey” – ‘Also Sprach Zarathustra’) and **DIMINUENDOS** to increase or decrease tension and **SFORZANDOS** are often used for added effect.

HARMONIES often change suddenly from **MAJOR** to **MINOR** (or in the reverse) to create unexpected moods and increase the tension. Sometimes the harmony is **ATONAL** or **BITONAL** (*Planet of the Apes*)

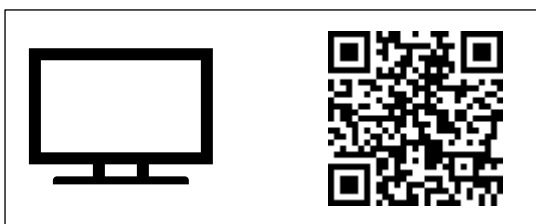
Use of “pre-existing” music written earlier by a Western “classical” composer

“Theme” from ‘2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) – Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Interval of a **FIFTH** giving a sparse, open quality often used to help support the openness of outer space

Increasing **DYNAMICS** from *pp* to *sfz*

Sudden change from a **MAJOR** to **MINOR CHORD**



“Hedwig’s Theme” from ‘Harry Potter’ (1968) – John Williams (1864-1949)

3/8 Time Signature in **TRIPLE METRE** to give a “bouncy”, “dance-like” feel

Use of **DIMINISHED INTERVALS** and the **TRITONE** (Augmented 4th) as **CHROMATIC HARMONY**

John Williams chooses the **CELESTA** as the instrument which first plays “Hedwig’s Theme” in the *Harry Potter* films. The Celesta has a unique “sparkling, tinkling” **TIMBRE (SONORITY)** creating a magical effect, the decay of the sound, reverberating for a long time, creates an “echo” and helps add to the “magical” connotations of the film.

The Lord of the Rings (The Fellowship of the Ring) Concerning Hobbits - Howard Shore

- How has Howard Shore created a **RURAL** and **COUNTRYSIDE** mood and atmosphere to the music? Consider rhythm, metre, sonority, instrumentation, texture, tonality, tempo, dynamics and pitch.
- Comment on the accompaniment in the opening two sections of music. Identify some of the instruments performing the accompaniment and how they are being played.

The Planet of the Apes: The Searchers - Jerry Goldsmith

- How have electronic timbres and sonorities been used at the beginning?
- Name an unusual instrument that is used in the extract.
- Name one unusual way of playing an instrument that you can hear.
- How does the composer create the atmosphere of an **ALIEN PLANT?** (*use the elements of music*).
- How does the composer **BUILD UP EXCITEMENT?** (*again use the elements of music*).

Main Theme from Bladerunner - Vangelis

- What is the musical term given to the sound effects made by the imaging device over the opening music which the man using this can also hear?
- What keyboard instrument has been used to create the sounds for this theme?
- The music features a long held note in the bass part of the music. What is the musical term for this?
- Give three words which describe the sonority of the sounds you can hear.



Film Music in Action, Spy, Thriller and Adventure Films

Thriller/Spy films often feature serious and tense atmospheres, lots of “action sequences”, government and conspiracies, shadowy figures and mysterious people and underground organisations. Film composers have responded to these features by using musical devices such as:

- **HARMONY - MINOR, DISSONANT CHORDS** to create an uneasy atmosphere.
- **MELODY - CHROMATIC MELODIES** which often have **DISJUNCT** movement (e.g. *Mission Impossible Theme* – see example below) to create tension

“Theme” from Mission Impossible – Lalo Schifrin/Danny Elfman




or **CONJUNCT** movement (e.g. *Pink Panther Theme*) to create a creepy, mysterious atmosphere.

- **Melodies which move mainly by STEP can be described as CONJUNCT**
- **Melodies which move mainly by LEAP can be described as DISJUNCT**


- **LOW PITCH** to sound “dark” and **LONGER LOW NOTES** to build tension with **DYNAMICS SUCH AS CRESCENDOS** to heighten the atmosphere.
- **REPEATED MOTIFS** (leitmotifs e.g. *James Bond & Jaws*) which are often “layered on top of each other” to create tension (e.g. “Capsule in Space” from ‘*You Only live Twice*’ by John Barry) or ascend chromatically (*sequencing*).

Minor
Dissonance
Conjunct
Motif
Crescendo
Repetition
Disjunct
Chromatic
Melody




The Battle from Gladiator - Hans Zimmer

- Listen to Holst's **Mars: Bringer of War** (a piece of existing music from The Western Classical Tradition) and then to The Battle from Hans Zimmer's soundtrack to the film Gladiator. How was Zimmer influenced by Holst's piece? What are the similarities? (*consider rhythm, metre, sonority, instrumentation, texture, tonality, tempo, dynamics and pitch*).



The Raid on Fort Knox from Goldfinger - John Barry

- The expression marking at the starts says **ALLA MARCIA**. What does this mean?
- One of the dynamic markings given on the score is **POCO A POCO CRESCENDO**. What does this mean?
- Name one tuned and one untuned percussion instrument you can hear in the music.
- How does John Barry build up excitement in the music?



A Kite in a Hurricane from Spectre (James Bond) - Thomas Newman

- How would you describe the pitch at the start of the extract?
- Describe the harmony and melody of the motif played by the piano.
- Explain two ways in which the Thomas Newman achieves the mood and atmosphere of **SUSPENSE** (*consider pitch, duration, dynamics, sonority and texture*).

Film Music in Animated Cartoons

- Early cartoons featured “light music” in the style of popular musical comedy of the time – with “dance-band” scorings for muted brass, woodwind and strings reminiscent of British bands of the period, often corresponding to the dance sequences within the animation
- Dramatic action sequences using “pre-composed” music from the Western Classical Tradition (*Dukas’s – The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*)
- Development of the “hit songs” (“Heigh-Ho”, “Someday my Prince will come” and “Whistle While You Work”)
- An innovative style of music related to recitative, in which the music directly imitates speech (*Snow White’s identification of cleaning jobs in the cottage*)
- **MICKY-MOUSING** to complement the character’s movements – a technique often seen in cartoon shorts of the time and still used in present day animations and cartoons
- Light orchestration and sonority and thin **TEXTURES**, to avoid overpowering the dialogue
- The “comedy tortoise” assigned a particular **TIMBRE/SONORITY** – a Bassoon!
- **MUSICAL CLICHÉS** – a particular short musical style “associated with” a particular action within the cartoon animation or to represent a particular place *e.g.* “The Fright of Discovery” – A loud, dissonant chord is held for a second before dissolving into scurrying, fast semiquavers, accompanied by sound effects as the character flees; “Dread” – a long, low-pitch held pedal note; “Walking” – “oom-cha” chords; “Tension” – note clusters and discords; “Running upstairs” – a fast ascending chromatic scale.

CASE STUDY

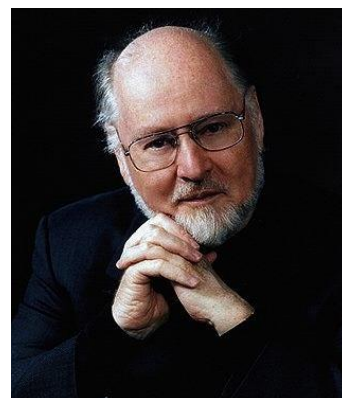
John Williams: Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner (from the soundtrack to *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*)



- Film released in 1977 with music by John Williams.
- Uses leitmotifs - a compositional technique used by Wagner and Richard Strauss in the operas of the Romantic Period – to represent characters (Darth Vader, Princess Leia, 'the Force') – and themes
- Instrumentation: Full Symphony Orchestra (86 players): Strings including Harp; Woodwind: 3 Flutes (3rd also playing Piccolo), 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, 2 Bassoons; Brass: 4 Horns, 3 Trumpets, 3 Trombones and Tuba; Percussion: Timpani, Triangle, Snare Drum, Tam-Tam (Gong), Glockenspiel, Vibraphone, Cymbals, Piano, Celesta.
- John Williams conducted the London Symphony Orchestra who recorded the *Star Wars* score in just 12 days!
- Approximate performing time 2 minutes 15 seconds.

Context

John Williams born in 1932, is one of the most famous and successful American film music composers writing soundtracks and music for many films including *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Indiana Jones*, *E. T.*, *Superman*, *Jurassic Park*, *Schindler's List*, the first three *Harry Potter* films (including 'Hedwig's Theme') and music for all of the *Star Wars* films winning many awards including Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards and Grammy Awards for his music.



Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope was released in 1977 and was the first instalment in the original trilogy of *Star Wars* films – a mix of sci-fi and fantasy genres. The story of the film is based on the Rebel Alliance's battle against the evil and oppressive force of the Galactic Empire. The character of Luke Skywalker is introduced and his journey in learning about 'The Force' and how he becomes part of the Rebel Alliance.

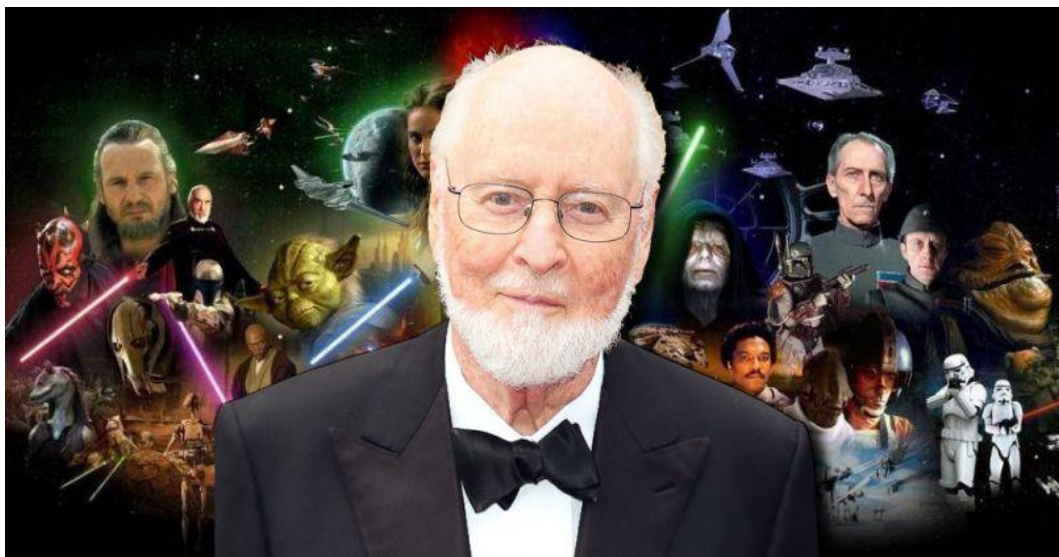
Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner is played over the opening credits of the film. The music is accompanied by scrolling text that sets the scene and gives the context of the film. The Rebel Blockade Runner is Princess Leia's spaceship, which the viewer sees when the credits are finished.

The score is purely orchestral – there is no music technology or electronic sounds used.

Structure

The structure, like most film music, is dictated by the on-screen action rather than being in an established form and structure (e.g. Sonata Form etc.) but the structure can be described as below.

Section	Bar Numbers	Key	On-Screen Action
Introduction (Fanfare)	1-3	B flat Major	'Star Wars' logo appears
Main Theme (A)	4-7	B flat Major	'Crawling' text moves across the screen setting the scene for the film
(A)	8-11 ³		
(B)	11 ⁴ -20		
(A)	21-29		
Link & Transition Section	30-35	Unstable Harmonies	
"Rebel Blockade Runner" Section The remainder of the extract takes its shape from the on-screen narrative action so has less of a musical structure and is more descriptive.	36-38	Modulates to C major (with added Ab) at bar 36.	A black screen is revealed as star-filled space
	39-41	Highly Chromatic, almost atonal.	Appearance of planets and increase in tension.
	42-43	Based around the note C (Pedal)	A spaceship comes into view
	44-50	Dissonant harmonies	Pursued and attacked by a much larger craft
	51-60	Sounds Bitonal – C Pedal with Db creates clashing harmony.	Action switches to the inside of the Rebel craft



Introduction (Fanfare) Bars 1-3 (film title appears and shrinks into the distance)

Mark the musical features below on the score (use colour if you like).



The metre is **4/4 – QUADRUPLE TIME**.

The tempo is **STATELY/MAJESTICALLY** (100 crotchet beats per minute).

The tonality is **B FLAT MAJOR**.

Opening **FANFARE** played by **BRASS** and **PERCUSSION**.

LOUD dynamics – marked **ff** – **FORTISSIMO**.

STACCATO – detached and **ACCENTS** (>) – played strongly – articulation on many notes, giving a strong and powerful feel.

TROMBONES and **TRUMPETS** play in **CANON (IMITATION)** for some of the fanfare – trombones start and trumpets echo them one beat later giving a **POLYPHONIC** thick texture.

TRIPLET RHYTHMS.

Fanfare moves in **INTERVALS OF PERFECT 4ths and PERFECT 5ths** giving the melody a heroic sound.

INVERTED TONIC PEDAL played **TREMOLANDO** in the violins.

POCO RALL. added to last beat of bar 3 – slowing down slightly with brass playing **UNISON F** triplets with timpani to prepare for the start of the main theme.



How does the tempo at the start reflect the mood and genre of the film?

How does the opening fanfare grab the audience's attention from the outset and build up excitement before the main theme begins?

Why do you think John Williams use the intervals of Perfect 4ths and Perfect 5ths in the opening fanfare?



The last beat of bar 3 is actually the first three notes of the Main Theme. What is the musical name for this 'pick-up beat'?

What effect do the triplet rhythms have on the music?



Main Theme (Bars 4-29) – accompanies ‘crawling’ text on-screen.

The main theme has an **AABA** structure in the style of a **MARCH**.

HIGH PITCH TRUMPETS play the main melody of the main theme.

SYNCOATED chords in the **BRASS, LOWER STRINGS** and **BASSOONS** with the rhythm emphasised by the **SNARE DRUM**.

QUARTAL HARMONY in many chords in the accompaniment.

UPPER WOODWIND and **VIOLINS** continue to play **TREMOLANDO** and continue **INVERTED TONIC PEDAL** from the introduction.

FORTISSIMO (ff) dynamics continue.

IMPERFECT CADENCE in bar 7.

DEMISEMIQUAVER run in bar 7

HOMOPHONIC (MELODY AND ACCOMPANIMENT) TEXTURE – the main trumpet/strings melody is accompanied by the rest of the orchestra. The size of the orchestra means that the texture is very thick.

The B section (bars 11⁴-20) contrasts in style to section A with the melody being played by all strings except double basses and **DOUBLED IN OCTAVES** (across 3 octaves). The **GLOCKENSPIEL** is heard playing certain notes with a change in dynamics – now **MEZZO FORTE (mf)** and a **DOMINANT PEDAL** in the bass (bars 12-15). A **COUNTER-MELODY** is heard from bar 15 to help build up a climax for the return of Section A of the Main Theme. **CONTRARY MOTION** is used in bar 18 using the scale of D flat Major before the dominant chords in bar 19 bring back to Section A.

Section A of the Main Theme is then repeated with a **HARP GLISSANDO** helping to connect this section of music to the next where the Rebel Blockade Runner transition begins.



How does the metre and chosen style for the Main Theme reflect the military nature of the film?

What instruments are playing the accompaniment? Describe the rhythm.

The Main Theme is in B flat Major. How does this choice of tonality reflect the title of the film?



The woodwinds and violins play soaring high notes and rapid semiquavers. How is this descriptive of the film genre?

Williams' melodies are memorable, an important factor in the success of his scores. Do you agree?



Link & Transition Section (Bars 30-35)


The link section is based on musical material heard earlier. From where?

The key signature has changed in bar 30. To what possible keys? Looking at the score, how would you describe the harmony?

What is the musical name given to the repeated rising figures played by the strings, bassoons and flutes?

**Transition Section (Bars 33-35)**

Strange, unstable harmonies sustained by **BRASS** and **WOODWIND**.

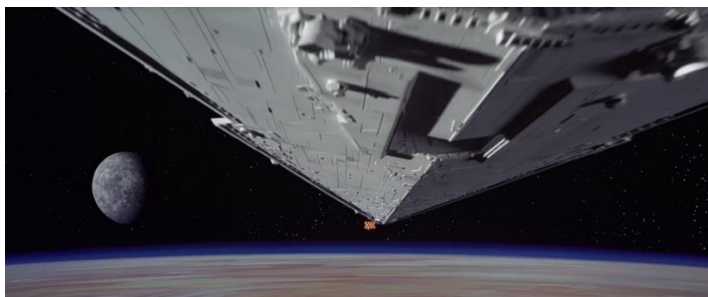
Rapid **ARPEGGIO** figures in the strings – no clear melody.

DIMINUENDO – gradually getting quieter.

AUGMENTED CHORD in bar 35.

The Rebel Blockade Section (Bars 36-60)

The next section of music accompanies the first piece of actual on-screen action of the film. After the 'crawling' text of the



introductory fanfare, Main Theme and Link and Transition Section, we see a black screen showing star-filled space. The camera pans downwards, revealing two planets, and then a third. A spaceship comes into view followed and under attack by a much larger craft. At the end of the music, the action switches to inside of the Rebel craft. Watch this action sequence now a few times (from the QR code up until 2:35). You will hear the noise of the spacecraft over the music.

The "audio only" version of The Rebel Blockade section can be heard using this QR code. Listen to this a few times before answering the following questions.



Section	Bars	Questions
Star-filled Sky Section	36-38	<p>Describe the harmony and tonality in bars 36-38.</p> <p>Describe the pitch and identify the instrument playing the melody.</p> <p>How does this melody compare with the Main Theme heard earlier in the piece?</p> <p>The flutes play an INVERTED PEDAL during this section – what is an INVERTED PEDAL?</p> <p>How does the TEXTURE of this section differ from the Main Theme?</p> <p>Describe the DYNAMICS of this section?</p> <p>How do they differ from the music which has been heard previously?</p> <p>The Harp plays an OSTINATO as an accompaniment. What is an OSTINATO?</p> <p>Identify 2 percussion instruments heard in this section.</p>
Appearance of Planets and increase in tension	39-41	<p>Is the harmony and tonality of this section best described as TONAL or HIGHLY CHROMATIC (almost ATONAL)?</p> <p>How does this compare to the Main Theme?</p> <p>Describe how the strings are playing?</p> <p>What effect does this create?</p> <p>What happens to the DYNAMICS in this section?</p>
Spaceship appears	42-43	<p>The bass instruments play a long, held low C, what is the musical term for this?</p> <p>What two percussion instruments can you hear clearly in this section?</p> <p>What does their SONORITY add to this section of the music?</p> <p>How do the brass represent the “Imperial Force” here?</p>
Larger spaceship in pursuit firing at the first	44-50	<p>Give one word to describe the HARMONY of this section.</p> <p>The dynamics are marked ff – what does this mean?</p> <p>The music changes from 4/4 to 3/4 at bar 44 – what effect does this have on the pace of the music and the action in the film?</p> <p>The loud, hammered chords incorporate the use of the TRITONE – describe this interval and why John Williams would use it in this section of the music.</p> <p>Describe the texture of the music during this section.</p> <p>The two chordal figures represent a leitmotif – which characters are represented at this point in the film?</p> <p>This section features a RITARDANDO (slowing down) and a PAUSE at the end of bar 50. What effect does this have of the music?</p>
Battle continues and then the action switches to inside the rebel craft	51-60	<p>This section begins with a change of tempo – 160 crotchet beats per minute – what effect does the tempo have in this section?</p> <p>What rhythmic device is used in the Timpani and bass from bars 51 to the end?</p> <p>The brass and upper woodwind play chords to accompany and represent the shooting of the Imperial craft including a NEOPOLITAN CHORD – what is a Neapolitan Chord and why do you think John Williams uses it here?</p>