

Berklee College of Music

SCORING A CHILDHOOD FAVORITE
The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy: Dream a Little Dream

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of
Master of Music in Scoring for Film, Television and Video Games

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ABSTRACT

The contents of this paper are the culmination of all the knowledge, experiences and work acquired during the year of Master of Music in Scoring for Film, Television and Video Games. Using all that we had learned, we started by finding some media that we would like to score (short film, animation, video game, script, etc.), find the tempo and markers in the media, create a mock-up and several revisions of our score for the media, prepare the score and parts, prepare for recording in one of the most esteemed and respected studios in the world, and mixing/mastering the recording for premier.

Having gone to undergraduate for composition, I felt comfortable in my composition, orchestration, and preparatory skills coming into the program. I knew that my biggest challenges would be reading scenes to extract the emotion out of them and creating realistic mock-ups. I had done a little work with mock-ups and scoring for media in my undergraduate, but never really dedicated much time to either of these things. I wanted my thesis project to really showcase my style and be unlike anything else I had done before. I also knew that it was going to be hard work, but it would be worth it.

This year has certainly been a strange one with the coronavirus breakout, especially with the thesis project. I hope that someone looking at this reflection in the future might be inspired, guided, and/or calmed by seeing what it was like to prepare this project in the midst of a pandemic, when nothing is certain and everything is changing all the time.

Keywords: composer, animation, orchestration, sequencing, mixing, coronavirus

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start off by thanking everyone in the SFTV Faculty. They decided that I was worth giving a shot- that I had something of value creatively to offer them, my fellow SFTV students, and Berklee as a whole. They have only wanted to see me succeed, and have always been there to guide, answer questions, and support however they could. I also would like to give a special thanks to Lucio for convincing the other faculty that there was indeed something about me worth investing in. That one decision has put me on a path that I could not be more humble and grateful to be on.

I would like to give a huge thanks to my parents. They have always wanted the best for me, and have supported me in any decision I have made. When I was worried about affording Berklee, they told me that I need to take this opportunity. They knew, even before I did, that this was something that I would love and succeed in. They knew Berklee was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and they weren't going to let me pass it up. For that, and everything else, I am immensely grateful.

I would like to thank my friends and family at home for supporting me during this decision as well. I would like to give a special thanks to my loving girlfriend, Nisha. She has kept me sane during this whole process, and was completely understanding in a time of huge upheaval and uncertainty.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the musicians, engineers, managers and everyone else associated with the future recording of my project. They will bring this score to life, and I can not wait to hear the result.

1. Introduction

Some of my most fond memories are from when I was about nine years old. I would spend the weekend at my father's house. We would order either pizza or chinese food and watch either the *Lord of the Rings*¹ trilogy or one of the trilogies of the *Star Wars*² saga (before the new trilogies were even being talked about). I'm sure my father probably got sick of watching the same movies every week, but neither of us knew that these movies would shape my future. I do not believe that it is radical to say that these movies are widely regarded as having some of the greatest scores of all time. These movies were the first films that I noticed the music in a film and what the music was adding. They were also the first scores that I would listen to without the film and just sit in the music.

While I started playing music around nine years old, I did not get into writing music until I was sixteen. I will go into this a bit more in the background section, but when I started writing music, I would listen to the music I enjoyed and was surrounded by more critically. Around this time, I went on a school music trip to a competition at Virginia Beach, Virginia. I had brought my Game Cube³ with me so that my friends and I could play *Super Smash Bros. Melee*⁴ at night. My best friend Alex also brought *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*⁵. I could not stop playing *Zelda*- not only because of the great gameplay and story, but because the music was fantastic. For the first time, I was noticing the music of a video game and how it was affecting me as I played. After finishing the game, I decided that I wanted to be a composer.

¹ Score written by Howard Shore.

² Score written by John Williams.

³ Gaming console by Nintendo.

⁴ Various tracks from popular Nintendo titles by Hirokazu Ando, Tadashi Ikegami, Takuto Kitsuta, and Shogo Sakai.

⁵ Score written by Koji Kondo, Tōru Minegishi, Kenta Nagata, and Hajime Wakai.

A couple years later, I attended undergraduate school for composition. My love and knowledge of music grew. I was listening to music I never knew existed and was absorbing everything I could and applying it to my writing and playing. I had a couple opportunities to write music for media, and enjoyed it, even though one of my scores did not get used after hours of work and several meetings (my first taste of the industry?). By my senior year, I started to get interested in film, and wanted to study the role that music plays in film. I took an intro to film class, and while we did not study film music, I gained a better understanding and insight to the process of creating a film. I saw how music supported the narrative, accented shots, lighting, color and filled in space. I realized that music was the glue in a film. I knew I wanted to go into a masters program to specialize in a form of composition, and was led to Berklee due to my interest in writing music for media. I wanted to be the glue in all those productions that helped shape my childhood and musical knowledge.

I remember when applying to Berklee, one of the questions was to propose what you might like to do for a thesis project. I sat staring at my computer in disbelief. I knew in the crevices of my mind that I would have to have a thesis paper and/or project, but I thought I would just figure it later. Here I was having to come up with an idea just to get into a grad school. I was panicking. I had no idea - not a single clue of what I might want to do. I looked out of the window for what must have been an uncomfortably long time before I came up with an idea, which I did not end up following through with (oops). Through the bobbling of several different ideas, I finally settled on a project that I believe has shown my unique compositional style, my career interests/goals, and my own personality.

2. Background and Literature Review

2.1. Background

I was born in 1996 in a small town called Media, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. As mentioned before, I started playing music when I was nine years old. I started out on the violin, but because of *Guitar Hero*⁶, I fell in love with guitar and started playing at eleven. I did not start lessons for guitar until thirteen, so I was mainly self taught until that point. By the time I got to high school, I was getting all my knowledge of classical repertoire from my school's string orchestra program, and rock and funk repertoire from my private guitar lessons and friends. This is the foundation of my musical background- string orchestra classical music, funk and rock.

While in high school, I took a music theory course, which also had a composition aspect. I remember my first piece was a simple chord progression on guitar with piano doubling and playing the melody. It was simple, and looking back not good, but I loved it. I loved the process of writing and hearing what was on the paper come to life. This course also began to open my mind to new music. I started to get more into jazz, but that grew more in my undergraduate studies. I also started to pick up more instruments, and in learning them, started to listen to music with different focuses based upon what I was learning. I would take what I had learned on one instrument, and apply it to all the others.

I then continued my studies of music into the undergraduate level at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia. The curriculum there is mainly jazz and pop focused and I was writing mainly classical, but I believe this gave my classical writing a different edge. I would take jazz theory and harmony and apply it to my classical writing. As I continued to work on my compositional and playing skills in undergraduate, I delved deeper into the world of twentieth-century classical, jazz of all kinds,

⁶ Cross-platform rhythm game using popular rock songs.

hip hop and rap, and minimalism. I studied abroad in Groningen, The Netherlands in my junior year at the Prince Claus Conservatoire. There I learned more about the cultural aspects of music. I was able to interact with musicians with a different musical and cultural upbringing than my own. All of these styles and experiences melted in my mind to create my own unique style.

2.2. Literature Review

I find it incredibly hard to pick just a few pieces of music that have influenced me. As described in the background, my musical journey has developed to encompass just about all music. I take bits and pieces from everything I listen to and apply it to my writing and playing. To this end, I will briefly talk about a few pieces of music that were influencing me during the writing process.

The first piece I would like to talk about is *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky. I believe that this piece has been one of biggest influences since I first heard it many years ago. When I first heard it, I was in junior year of high school in my AP⁷ Music Theory Course. I fell in love with the complexity in both the rhythm and the harmonies. I also enjoy that Stravinsky's writing consists of short melodic and rhythmic sections that constantly get referred back to. As I am sure it is for many others, this would become a gateway into twentieth-century classical music.

The next bit of music that I would like to talk about is the minimalist movement, particularly the work of Steve Reich and Philip Glass. I was first introduced to minimalist music in my freshman year of undergraduate when I heard the piece *Different Trains* by Steve Reich. It amazed me that something so simple as a repeated chord with some effects could be so encapsulating. I also was blown away by the Reich managed to turn a train whistle into a melodic instrument. I first came across Philip

⁷ AP: Advanced Placement course in the American Public Education System. Usually the equivalent of a 100 level college course.

Glass's music when I saw a Tiny Desk Concert⁸ of The Dublin Guitar Quartet playing arrangements of his piano works. I fell in love with the way the various lines interacted with each other to create a wash of sound, and loved even more when they would break this wash to come together.

The next bit of music I would like to talk about is the music of Frank Zappa. I was introduced to Zappa by my father at the end of my senior year of high school with the album *Apostrophe (?)*. I immediately fell in love with his music. I love the complexity of the harmonies and rhythms. It was as if someone had taken the Stravinsky I had learned about, and applied it to rock music. This love of Zappa furthered in my freshman year of undergraduate studies with the albums *The Sheik Yerbouti*, and *Just Another Band from L.A.* My favorite piece from Zappa is actually off a live album entitled *Puttin' on the Ritz*. The piece is called *Envelopes*, and I love all the complexity in the instrumental tune. What I love more than anything is Zappa's use of angular and disjunct melodies.

The final bit of music I would like to talk about is the genre of funk music. I began listening to and learning about funk music early in my musical education. I could not get enough of artists such as Earth, Wind, & Fire, Parliament, Bootsy Collins, Prince, Herbie Hancock, Stevie Wonder, and Tower of Power, just to name a few. I love how their music can make anybody want to get up and dance. Their music is music that feels good. Their music taught about feel, groove, and how to play and write music that comes from inside you.

⁸ Concert series by National Public Radio (NPR) featuring music by musicians of every style and background from all over the world.

3. The Creative Process of Writing, Recording, Editing, and Mixing

3.1. First Assignments

The first real writing we had to do in the program was a trio for two clarinets and a bass clarinet to a description of a scene. The idea was the piece was to reflect the mood changes and capture the image that the description conjured. We had one week to come up with our score to be recorded, to which I immediately panicked. In my undergraduate, I took a commercial music class where we had to write commercial jingles in a week, but never score a scene with mood changes. At this time, I still had not made the transition to writing in the DAW⁹. I wrote the score in Sibelius¹⁰, which is nice because you make the score at the same time as you write, but the playback is truly horrible.

After finishing the piece, we recorded them. We had eighteen minutes, which felt like a lot for a minute-and-a-half cue. In my undergraduate, we did recordings at the end of the semester, and we only had nine minutes, so I thought it would be no problem. I was more nervous to be conducting. I had some training in conducting, but I had never used it in application before. The eighteen minutes flew by. I could not believe they were already over, but I had thought that I got what I wanted out of it. I was more excited to have heard my music live. It would not be until we got the sessions back and started to mix mine that I realized the piece sucked. It was totally uninteresting. I was embarrassed, but I knew and pushed myself to do better next time.

I feel that I did accomplish this. Even on cues that I did not feel like were my best work, I still felt proud of them. I felt that they were interesting to listen to, and reflected the given cues. From that first recording session until the final project, we had a variety of styles and genres to score. I made the transition to writing in the DAW first, and I do not regret it. Having a better idea of what the piece will

⁹ DAW: Digital Audio Workstation.

¹⁰ Notation software.

sound like as you write it certainly helps your brain flow with ideas, especially in terms of orchestration.

Our first remote session with The Budapest Art Orchestra was for one of two scenes, of which I chose to do the “Kiss” cue from *Gran Hotel*¹¹. I chose it because I would never have classified my music as romantic music and wanted to challenge myself. I remember being nervous about the session because I wrote a couple bars of 13/16 in the beginning of the piece. It definitely took some time out of my session, but the orchestra was able to figure it out just fine. I was more excited overall at hearing an orchestra play my music. It was an incredible experience.

Around this time, my directed studies advisor, Jeanine Cowen, told me I should start thinking about what I would want to do for the thesis project. It was early, but she said that starting sooner rather than later would benefit me in the long run. After taking a few weeks to think about it, I decided I wanted to do a video game. Jeanine directed me to look at some game builds in Unity, and I started to make a shooter/survival game. I was starting to build it, and quickly got lost, confused, and uninterested. We then came up with a story game, where the player walks through a monster story, as I wanted the music to be based on extended techniques. I also then struggled to come up with a good story to tell.

When I came back from winter break, my new advisor, Lucio Godoy, also wanted me to start thinking about the thesis project right away. I had told him about the monster game idea I had with Jeanine, but also my doubts about making a game. Lucio then suggested that I just find a script, or have a friend write one to score to. I was still thinking about the darker approach, so I reached out to my father for a suggestion of some H.P. Lovecraft I could read. My father recommended that I read

¹¹ Score written by Lucio Godoy.

The Shadow Over Innsmouth. I got the novel, and was excited to get started, but with the workload of the semester, I never started.

It would be couple weeks later that my roommate Will and I started watching *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy*¹², a show from our childhood. We remembered that the show was great, so we wanted to watch it in our free time. We then came upon an episode entitled *Dream a Little Dream*. The idea behind the episode is that the three main characters eat old pizza and have weird dreams because of the pizza. The episode was the series' version of *Fantasia*¹³. I remember turning to Will after and saying, "That would be so cool to do for the thesis. A rescoring of *Billy and Mandy*". I brought the idea into Lucio, and he said that he thought it would be a great idea for the thesis. I was so excited to do a cue from a show that I love so much.

The whole episode was obviously going to be too long for the thesis, so I started out by making a couple different cuts of scenes to show Lucio. We decided on Billy's sequence and Grim's sequence because Billy's had a stark contrast going from a cute, comedic scene, to a dark, nightmare scene. I chose Grim's because the animation had a distinct rhythm to it, and I knew it would be fun to play around with a rhythmic sequence. The only problem was that it was still too long. The solution Lucio came up with was that I would do the first portion of Billy's sequence for the final Budapest recording, and the rest for the London recording.

3.2. The Making of "Dream a Little Dream"

After I had finally settled on doing this cue from *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy*, I could not wait to get started. I was so happy with doing a cue from this show. Since I did the first

¹² First Season score written by Guy Moon.

¹³ Movie by Disney where the Philadelphia Orchestra played pieces from classical repertoire and animation teams at Disney created scenes based upon imagery that the music created in their heads.

portion of the sequence of the cue for my last Budapest Session, I had an idea already started on feeling, mood, melodic ideas, and tempo.

I had done the Budapest portion of the cue in DP¹⁴, but I was in the process of transitioning back into Logic¹⁵. I honestly did not want to look at DP anymore, so I decided to do this cue in Logic instead. I would have to redesign the sounds and instruments I would use for the mockup, but for me it was worth taking the time for.

The first thing that I did was import the video into Logic, and create all the markers for hit points of important events in the video that I wanted to accent with my music. From there I tapped out into a metronome what I felt the pacing of the video was. This is one major advantage to DP- DP has a function in the program that will find a tempo for you based off your markers, whereas in Logic it's solely dependent on the composer. After I had my tempo set up, I changed some meters to make major events happen on the downbeats. Overall, I kept the cue in 4/4 as much as I could to make it easier for the performers to read in the future.

I then loaded in solo string pizzicato patches to start writing. I would add new instruments and articulations as I felt that the cue and orchestration needed them. After writing out Billy's cue, I then did the same process for Grim's sequence.

Since I wrote all the string parts with solo patches to sketch, I went in after and filled them in with more section based string patches. During the mixing process, I blended the solo strings into the section patches, but left them a little present so they would act as section leaders. Also during the mixing process, I did not mess too much with EQ¹⁶, as with Spitfire¹⁷ their samples are generally mixed

¹⁴ DP: Digital Performer, a DAW.

¹⁵ Logic: DAW by Apple.

¹⁶ EQ: Equalizer, used to clean frequencies in instruments, and make color characteristics more present.

¹⁷ Spitfire: Sample instrument company.

by master mixing and master engineers. There was a few instances where the brass or strings were too bright, so I would take out some of the high frequencies.

During mastering, I followed procedures that we talked about with Pablo in his Recording, Mixing, and Editing classes. I started with a light EQ to clean some strange frequencies, the I added some light compression with a long attack and release, and a light limiter to bring up the volume. I then ran all of that through Ozone 9¹⁸ Elements for more dynamic EQing, maximizing, and stereo imaging.

I wish I could talk about recording in London, printing parts, and mixing/mastering that session, but it has not happened yet due to the coronavirus outbreak!

3.3. Musical and Narrative Analysis of “Dream a Little Dream”

The beginning of the thesis cue sounds like it starts a bit abruptly, but when one remembers that the cue is the continuation of Billy Sequence (called Billy Wreaks Havoc) and not the start, the intro makes more sense. I knew that I needed to have some consistency from the first section of the Billy Sequence to the second, which is why the first melody of the thesis cue is a return to the original melody in the first section.



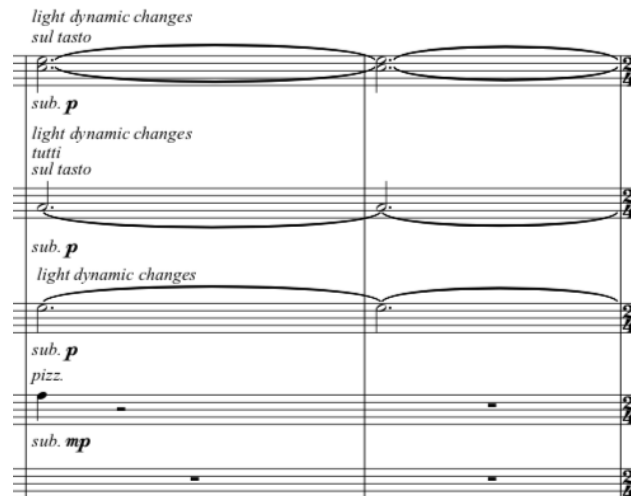
Figure 1a: Melody of *Dream a Little Dream*, bars 1-3.

¹⁸ Ozone 9: Mixing/mastering plugin by Izotope.



Figures 1b-c: Melody of Billy Wreaks Havoc, bars 5-9.

As is shown above, the melodies are essentially the same, save some rhythmic differences and tempo. This was also done, because the thesis cue starts with Billy in a hole with these cute bunnies that hatched out of eggs. Billy and the viewer then watches the bunnies transform into horrible monsters. This prompted me to return to my cute and serene melody from Billy Wreaks Havoc to accentuate the difference once they bunnies become monsters. In addition, because the bunnies were not in the beautiful field, like in the beginning of the Billy Sequence, I felt that there should be a



different harmonic and rhythmic backing to the melody. In Billy Wreaks Havoc, I mainly have a light harmonic bed, but because the thesis cue starts with baby bunnies, I wanted to have something bouncy and fun. This is what prompted me to start the cue with a pizzicato backing instead of the harmonic bed from Billy Wreaks Havoc.

Figure 2a: Light Harmonic bed from Billy Wreaks Havoc, bars 5-6



Figure 2b: Bouncy pizzicato backing from Dream a Little Dream, bars 1-3.

The beginning of Dream a little Dream starts in an F major/lydian realm as it did in Billy Wreaks Havoc. This was chosen partially for consistency, and because when the bunnies transform, the cue changes into the relative D minor/dorian realm. This was not desired for a particular color, but because the only MIDI controller¹⁹ I had was twenty-five keys, and cues in D would give me two octaves without having to press the octave key in the middle of a phrase. That being said, having the low D in the basses is nice to have, as it strengthens, warms, and rounds out the low end.

¹⁹ MIDI controller: keyboard device that sends messages to the DAW to tell the computer what notes to play and how to play them.

As mentioned before, the whole episode from *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy* is done in a *Fantasia*-esp way. Going into my rescoring, I knew I wanted to keep that idea, which meant a lot of the cue was going to be based around Mickey Mousing²⁰. This was explored in *Billy Wreaks Havoc* with sections like the descending chromatic line in the violin and flute to show Billy falling, and was continued in *Dream a Little Dream* starting with the tremolo swell to accent the tension and mystery of the focus on the weird pizza offered by one of the bunnies.



Figure 3a: Descending chromatic line in violins Mickey Mousing Billy's fall, bars 29-30.

²⁰ Mickey Mousing: A term in animation when the music syncs and accents what happens on screen, and vice-e-versa. Derives from early 30s and 40s Mickey Mouse cartoons where this technique was extremely common.

Figure 3b: String tremolo from *Dream a Little Dream* to Mickey Mouse focus and mystery of the pizza and Billy's reaction, bars 6-7.

The next section begins with timpani and bassoon starting a new melody to accentuate the change of mood, as the bunnies have begun to change into monsters. I came about this idea from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* where he would occasionally give small melodic content to the timpani because of the power they can bring. This idea would become recurring throughout the rest of Billy's section as I enjoyed the percussive force and energy the timpani brings to the melody and the accompanying images. This melodic idea in the timpani is answered with a pizzicato response in the strings, to act as the back and forth between the bunnies transforming, and Billy being frightened and confused about what was occurring in front of him.

Figure 4: Hard timpani melody for the bunnies transforming, and responding pizzicato melody for Billy's reactions, bars 8-13.

This continues until the last bunny finally transforms. I Mickey Moused the bunnies eyes spinning with a ratchet for comedic effect, but had the horns rip for the bunny's yell. The solo horns would cut through the rest of the orchestra that were building up tension to this point, and would allow for a brief breath before continuing into the next section.

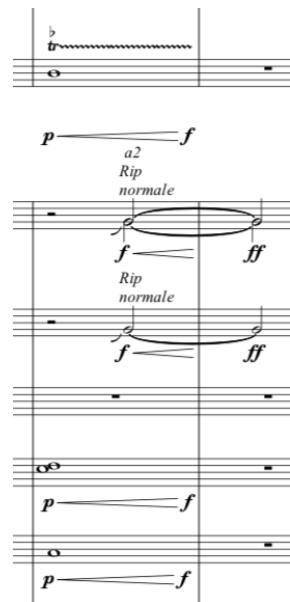


Figure 5: Horn rip to Mickey Mouse the bunny's roar, with trombones and bassoons contributing to tension swell leading into horn rip, bars 15-16.

For the next section of Billy's sequence, I transitioned into a C octatonic scale, mainly so I could use the tension of the flat 2, flat 3, flat 5, and flat 7 as well as the natural 3 and 5. The next section begins Billy's escape from the monster bunnies, so I knew that the minor second tensions would be handy in accenting the horror of Billy's nightmare. This harmonic change would also accent

the color change from the bright pastels of the field in Billy Wreaks havoc to the dark and grey tones of Billy being chased in Dream a little Dream. In addition to the harmonic color change, I started an ostinato in the cello to act as the driving force behind Billy being chased.

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Figure 6: Beginning of chase ostinato in C octatonic, bars 17-20.

This chase continues with some Stravinsky-esp wind parts playing melodic/harmonic content over the ostinato. The bass drum and timpani are then used to Mickey Mouse the bunny mound growing larger until the breaking point. At this point, I stop everything except the basses, bass clarinet, and tuba all playing a low C to break the tension of the growing mound. From the break and space left with the solitary C, I then used the brass in a pseudo-fanfare style to accent the bunny breaking through the mound to chase after Billy.

Figure 7: Low C in tuba, which leads into the brass fanfare to accent the bunny breaking through the mound, bars 26-28.

After the bunny breaks through, the sequence continues with the chasing of Billy. I returned to the ostinato of the cello, but this time the violins 2 and violas play a counter-ostinato that creates a polyrhythmic feeling inside of the ostinato. I also introduce the off beat accents in the violins 1, which later get picked up by the horns in a minor second stab to stick out through the orchestra. By the end of this last section, the violins 1, trombones, and piccolo are playing a quarter-note melody accenting

the color of the scale. In addition, the nature of the melody feels cyclical, so that it creates the feeling of not going anywhere, accenting Billy's inability to escape. The rest of the orchestra are all playing different lines by this point, creating a hectic, chaotic feeling until the final note, when Billy wakes up.

Figure 8: String section at end of Billy sequence showing the different lines being played, creating a hectic and chaotic feeling, bars 34-36.

When Billy wakes up, is when Grim's section begins. As mentioned before, Grim's sequence is highly rhythmic, as the animation clearly implies a tempo. With this in mind, I could not keep the same tempo as before. In many of my other pieces, instead of writing a tempo change, I almost always prefer to do a written *accelerando* or *ritardando*, favoring lengthening and shortening musical material to feel faster or slower. The nature of the sequence would not allow for this, so an actual tempo change would be needed. I came up with a solution to this sudden tempo change by having my percussion stems play the beginning of the sequence. When the tempo changes, the live players would have one full bar of new click before having to play, instead of trying to anticipate the new tempo.

A consideration with Grim's sequence was also that there would be dialogue occurring over the music, almost acting like another instrument. For this reason, I left the beginning of the sequence a little more open and color-driven before delving into the real melodic/thematic material.

Figure 9: Example of the string color material to give the beginning of Grim’s Sequence a more open feeling, bars 39-43.

Delving into the thematic material, I started with just the cellos playing a pizzicato line. Mainly downbeats in A dorian, with some flourish to the fourth and fifth. This grows as the other strings play independent pizzicato lines on top of and between each other. While there is some structure behind the length of each instrument’s line, the section derives from minimalistic music, like that of Steve

Reich. Each line fits in with each other, but not in a set way- they are constantly shifting and weaving. Sometimes the violins 2 line would occur every three eighth notes, sometimes it would be two, for example.

Figure 10: Example of different pizzicato lines in the strings weaving between each other in a shifting manner, bars 49-52.

In relation to the scene, this does not accent much, outside of creating a weaving, evolving texture that the listener can get lost in, as Grim gets lost in Mandy appearing on the television. The main purpose was mainly to set up melodic and harmonic detail that would be expanded upon later in the sequence. The marimba truly accents the scene before the Mickey Moused crash of the television by tremoloing and accenting Grim’s eyes and nose circling around his head.

After the crash and accompanying “wah-wah” music, the vibes and celesta accent the Mandy’s landings as they come out of the television. This is important as the percussion, vibes, and celesta will mainly take over the Mickey Mousing of Mandy’s actions later in the sequence as well. I have the vibes and celesta following a pentatonic structure for no particular reason other than that it sounded nice.

The cellos, flute, and timpani play the pickup back into the downbeat groove. The timpani and trombones accent Mandy’s heads that float up onto the screen. I chose to do this because as the scene was becoming more percussive, I wanted the Mickey Mousing to add to the rhythmic elements. I did the pairing of the timpani and trombones because it was a pairing often used by Bernard Herrmann, as the timpani adds some punch to the trombones.



Figure 11: Example showing the doubling of the timpani and trombones to add more punch, bars 57-58.

After this, I reintroduce the off-beat accent idea from Billy's sequence to add more rhythm. I also bring back the woodblock on downbeats to add more rhythm. After Grim cuts off Mandy's heads again, I opened the orchestration up a bit more, with the woodwinds playing the pizzicato lines from earlier. The strings also double the woodwinds here to give them more power and color and to create more contrast from the more stripped orchestration of the section prior.

The image shows a musical score for four staves, likely woodwinds, spanning three measures. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff has a bass clef. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The fourth staff has a bass clef. The music is marked with a dynamic of *mf* (mezzo-forte). The first measure is marked with a 'J' above the staff. The second measure is marked with 'a2' above the staff. The music consists of rhythmic patterns with accents and slurs, typical of a pizzicato section.

Figure 12: Woodwinds now taking the pizzicato section from before for melodic development and to create a larger orchestration, bars 62-64.

After this section, the Mandys are still alive and are starting to multiply further. I used the percussion, vibes, and celesta as talked about before to accent actions of the Mandys. To create the tension of the intimidation of the growing number of Mandys and their inability to die, I used a swell in the orchestra to lead into the last section of Grim's sequence. I used tight harmonies in the swell to create a dense feeling leading into the last section.



Figure 13: Example of tight harmonies used to create dense, rising tension, bars 66-67.

Moving into the final section of Grim's sequence, there are no more pizzicato passages. Everything is now staccato to be rhythmic and gritty. The cello returns with a variation of their original ostinato, but with a new ending that is doubled in a few instruments. This new ending is also very disjunct in a very Frank Zappa-esq way to create a tripping feeling. This continues to build until the full orchestra is playing. I introduce the minor second off-beat stabs in the horns from Billy's Sequence to add tension and rhythm to the scene. The Mandys are marching towards Grim at this point, so the snare drum is in full swing playing a march-esq pattern. Violins 1, flutes, and piccolos play an ascending line that increases in rhythmic value to add tension and a rising feeling leading into the finale climax.

The image displays a musical score for an orchestra, divided into two systems. The instruments listed on the left are: Hn. 1&3, Hn. 2, Tpt. 1&2, Tbn. 1&2, B. Tbn., Tbn., Timp., B. D., Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The score shows various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The second system features a disjunct cello ending and off-beat minor second stabs in the brass.

Figure 14: Example of rising tension, chaoticism, and rhythm leading into finale climax. Examples of rising violin line, disjunct cello ending, and off-beat minor second stabs in brass, bars 74-75.

Looking at many of my other pieces, I am not a fan of traditional cadences. At least not of ones that heavily fall on the tonic. This ending is no exception. Grim is being overwhelmed and pummeled by the Mandys, so I believe that ending in an unsatisfying, almost tense way was appropriate. To achieve this, I had the full orchestra play the last two notes of the disjunct cello line, which is a minor second step from B to B flat with some parts playing the perfect fifth above to create a “power chord”-type harmony.



Figure 15: Example of minor second step ending with “power chord” harmony, bar 76.

4. Conclusion

It is hard to believe that the year is already over. It seems like yesterday that we were getting four assignments in one week and stressing over how it could ever possibly be done in time. Looking back on those days, that feels like nothing now. That just feels like “okay, yeah, sure. Let’s do it”.

I can say with full confidence that I have learned so much during my time in the SFTV program. I have also grown a lot as a composer, musician, worker, and person. SFTV prepares you to work in the competitive, fast-paced industry that is the film, television, and video game industry.

Through this thesis project, I feel that I created something I am truly proud of. I believe that is a culmination of everything I’ve learned this year. I believe that it is uniquely me.

Even though the coronavirus outbreak threw a major wrench in the year, we overcame. We adapted, changed, and made isolation work for us. That's what our industry is all about anyway- always changing, always evolving, and never predictable.

I'm truly going to miss everyone from this year, but I'm hoping to see everyone in London when we actually get a chance to record.