This Document of Agreement is shared between students of

**USC THORNTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC**
Department Of Screen Scoring

and students of

**USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS**
Production Division, Animation Division
& Peter Stark Production Program

CTPR 310, 508, 479/486, 480/546, 547, 581
CTAN 401, 450, 495, 594
CMPP (Stark) 541, 592

*The faculty and staff of the USC filmmaking and scoring programs proclaim their admiration and gratitude to the late, great, Professor Kenneth Hall, who, until his untimely passing in August 2016, was the longtime occupant of the SCA Ken Wannberg Chair of Music Editing. In a manner representative of his professional commitment to students and colleagues alike, Kenny Hall promoted and maintained the formal and healthy working relationship between the students enrolled in these two world-famous programs. He wisely insisted on reminding us all that “Mutual respect for each discipline is our strength for a successful interdisciplinary collaboration and must be honored and protected at all times.”*
All student-film projects are extra-curricular for the student composers, who are donating their time and talent in an attempt to bring the crucial element of original music to SCA projects. They do so in the spirit of collaborative filmmaking, and they welcome this opportunity to participate.

Guidelines & Agreement

1. HOW TO FIND A COMPOSER FOR YOUR FILM

• Screen Scoring Website

Thornton’s Department of Screen Scoring has a website where filmmakers can find profiles and recent examples of musical work by the 20 graduate composers:

http://uscscoring.com/students/2020

As a first step, all filmmakers should take the time to listen to the music and review the profiles of all of these composers so that they can rank them by preference (in some cases, a first and/or second choice may have scheduling conflicts, making those composers unavailable). Filmmakers are urged to move quickly in this effort.

It is never too early to contact a composer!

• DIRECTOR/COMPOSER PITCH MEETINGS

Each semester, a formal meeting is scheduled to allow filmmakers to meet the composers and pitch their projects to all at the same time. The dates for these meetings will be announced in the production classes.

All filmmakers are urged to attend these sessions and take advantage of the unique opportunity to meet the composers. Those unable to attend should contact the composers of their choice as quickly as possible and set up an introductory meeting.
• Directors and producers are not permitted to ask potential composers to audition for the opportunity to score their films by having them write a piece of music or create a demo score or mock-up!

Instead, filmmakers should learn what they can from their initial conversations with the composers to establish trust through a clear line of communication. As soon as possible, they should make their choice of composer, and immediately alert any other composer they may have spoken to, thanking them for their time and consideration.

• Filmmakers should reveal and discuss the magic of their story to NO MORE THAN TWO composers.

Filmmakers should give the composers a chance to respond to the script. When asked about their musical desires, filmmakers should not be afraid to say: “I don’t know,” or, “I’m not sure.” The composer is there to help and will search to find the musical idea that might work best for the filmmaker. Also, screen composers are usually more versatile than people realize, so filmmakers of, say, a comedy, should not hesitate to approach a composer who has not yet scored a film in that genre.

2. AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTS

After the filmmaker and composer have agreed to collaborate, they will sign this agreement. The creation of the score will not commence until both parties have signed the agreement. Each party should keep a signed copy for their records. In addition, the composer shall sign the attached “COMPOSER / MUSICIAN RELEASE.”

3. THE SPOTTING SESSION

• The success in every Director/Composer collaboration starts with agreement concerning where the music is placed!

When the picture is “locked,” the filmmaker and composer shall meet at a “spotting session,” where they screen the film and discuss in detail the musical needs of the film. During this
discussion, either the composer or music editor (if one is on hand) creates the “Spotting Notes,” assigning a number to each cue (i.e., M1, M2, M3, etc.) and stipulating the cue title, start time, total length, scene description, and any special requests from the director. A copy of these spotting notes must be supplied to the producer and director. Additionally, a courtesy copy for the Sound Designer or Sound Editor may help avoid conflicts of sounds in an action sequence. (This policy is practiced professionally throughout the film industry.) Occasionally a composer may want to start a cue slightly earlier or end a little later, but, in general, no significant changes should be made without the approval of the filmmaker.

Filmmakers should communicate their emotional ideas to their collaborating composer. He or she might wish to show a scene representing the mood of the film and ask for a (short) mock-up based on the emotion desired for the subtext of the film. It doesn’t take many notes to get an idea of the melody or color one might be seeking. Keep it simple! Student films are usually too short to establish more than one theme that can be developed for each story.

- **Communication is the most important discipline a director can contribute to the composer’s effort.**

Filmmakers should know how they want the audience to feel. For instance, “I want the audience to be very sympathetic to the main character here.” Or, “Let’s really scare the audience on this cut.” Filmmakers should try to speak in emotional terms. This gives their composer an opportunity to react and perhaps come up with exactly what is needed. Additionally, one might wish to mention the style of a composer or score that represents the emotion or feel that resonates with the filmmaker. Another reference point might be a temp track, which is fine as long as the filmmaker is clear about the rationale for their choice(s).

That is to say, what is it about the temp track that you like—is it the energy and pace; or, perhaps, the overall musical design (large orchestra vs. solo voice, or electronic sounds with a small string orchestra, jazz group featuring a lead trumpet, etc.); or is

---

**Caution:** Do not fall in love with the temp music! Also very important: by no means can any temp music be used in the Final Mix unless the filmmaker has acquired a license from the appropriate entities (publisher, record companies, etc.) prior to the mix (see #7 below).
it the way the temp track hits the mark for the emotional core of the scene or story?

- **Filmmakers are not permitted to request that the composer compose a “a wall–to-wall score.”** That is to say, to be effective, music needs to have an entrance and exit, so it is counter productive to have music start at the beginning of a film and continue all the way through the end.

4. SHOW AND TELL

Within a day or 2 of the spotting session, the director is to schedule a meeting to review the musical direction with the composer. In this way both parties can feel comfortable about being “on the same page.”

5. REWRITES

Virtually every student—and professional—film-score will require some kind of rewrite. Some cues will need a minor tweak, but if more than a third of the score is being significantly rewritten, a communication breakdown has occurred. This means that the time is ripe to create a different approach to getting the filmmaker’s ideas understood so that the music can successfully support the emotional needs of the picture.

- **No more than 2 rewrites per cue can be requested of the composer. And the final such request cannot be made later than 3 days prior to the scoring session, or, if there is no scoring session, 4 days prior to the dub.** The rationale for this rule is this: The time spent composing the cues often comprises less than half of the entire scoring schedule. The remainder of the time, the composer is developing themes and styles, orchestrating, preparing pre-records and scoring files, as well as editing and mixing. If live musicians are used, a substantial amount of time also is spent recruiting players and creating printed parts for them to use at the session.

6. HOW TO SCHEDULE A RECORDING SESSION

SCA Sound Department Manager Erick Ziegler has established a procedure for reserving recording and mix–down sessions on one of the Scoring Stages. (Only filmmakers—not composers—can schedule use of the scoring stages.)
• The filmmaker’s sound instructor and SA will supply this information, which will also be posted on the sound department bulletin board in SCA basement. Further, a hard copy can be obtained from the Post Production Front Desk.

7. MUSIC LICENSING

Requesting any pre-recorded music from the Thornton School of Music is not permitted. If previously recorded music is chosen outside of the Thornton scoring program, a Master Use and Sync License that includes the clause “All Rights, In Perpetuity, Worldwide” must be obtained from the copyright owner(s). “Festival Rights Only” IS NOT ADEQUATE. All music must be cleared for SCA student films intended for public use. NO EXCEPTIONS.

SCA students also have access to the Opus 1 music library on every workstation in the Post Department. Use of music from this library ensures that all required rights can be acquired. Instructions on how to use the Opus 1 search engine and how to create Cue Sheets are located on the SCA Knowledgebase. Those filmmakers who use music from the Opus 1 music library in the final version of their movie must create cue sheets and submit a hard copy to the Sound Department Manager located in SCA B101, or an Excel file via email to, rhyland@cinema.usc.edu.

8. TIME SCHEDULES

1. In order to allow the composer time to design a complete score, it is strongly suggested that the filmmaker delivers to the composer a copy of the first edit so that themes and stylistic options can be prepared.

2. The composer shall submit themes and a proposed stylistic approach in a timely manner, and the filmmaker shall respond with approval or requests for changes within 3 days of that delivery.

3. As noted in section 3 (above), the spotting session should take place promptly upon creation of the Picture Lock.

4. As noted in section 4 (above), the filmmaker and composer should meet within 1 or 2 days of the spotting session to review the composer’s approach.
5. The composer must be allowed a **minimum of 7 days between Picture Lock and Sound Lock** to complete his or her score (10 to 14 days is a more advisable schedule).

6. As noted in Section 5 (above), the filmmaker is entitled to a **maximum of 2 rewrite requests per cue** in the score, the last of which **must arrive to the composer 3 days prior to the scoring session**, or, if there is no scoring session, 4 days prior to the dub.

7. If a live scoring session is to be held, it must be scheduled to take place **no later than 3 days prior to Sound Lock**.

8. The composer shall deliver the completed DAW file–formatted score to the filmmaker (or sound supervisor) **by 6 pm on the day prior to Sound Lock**.

9. **COMPENSATION**

   The composer shall receive no monetary compensation for his or her work in composing, orchestrating, conducting, programming, sweetening, or mixing of his or her score; however, should the filmmaker request a “live recording session,” the filmmaker shall provide funds for compensation to the performing musicians as well as to the recording/mixing engineer at the current rate of $25 per hour each.

10. **MUSIC OWNERSHIP**

    All original music created by the composer for this project is owned by that composer. However, as set forth in the attached “Composer / Musician Release,” the composer grants to USC, its successors, assignees, and licensees full use of such music in the project and also for any and all promotional materials related to said project. In the event of any dispute, that document takes precedence over this one.
We, the undersigned hereby agree to abide by all terms, conditions, and policies set forth herein.

Title of Project:

Name(s) of Producer(s): ____________________________________________

Signature of Producer: ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________

Name of Director: ________________________________________________

Signature of Director: ____________________________________________

Date: __________________________

Name of Composer: ______________________________________________

Signature of Composer: __________________________________________

Date: __________________________