

WGI Front Ensemble Design/Arranging Concepts

Presented by Matt Jordan

So we have a concept... Now what?

Music Research

- Think about what mood this concept creates
- Now listen to as MUCH and as VARIED music as you can... Pandora, iTunes, eMusic
- And this should be EVERYONE on staff! The more ears the better.
- Make a list of things you really dig, even if you're not sure it'll work.
- Avoid the temptation to search for songs based on a title... It is NEVER effective!
- Always listen out of your comfort zone, even IF your show is "The Music of Katy Perry"

Music Selection

- Listen to your new list by itself, over and over.
- Start thinking realistically about things like pacing and tempo... does it fit?
- Find out about licensing. Some composers don't like having their music arranged, and won't grant you the rights (or will for a hefty fee). Better to find out sooner than later!
- Find small parts of pieces that you like, and decide if you can use those as inspiration for "original" music.
- Think about tunes that establish a "vibe" but wouldn't work in the show as a piece. Can you write something original to capture that vibe?
- Possibly establish a rough "timeline" version of your show in Garageband, etc. that plans out all of the projected effect moments, INCLUDING NARRATION. Shows that have narration as an afterthought are never as smooth as ones that are completely integrated!
- Finalize the music in show order... Many times things develop organically as the writing process begins!

Initial Writing Stages

- Start with the section of the music you feel the strongest about. Authors don't necessarily start writing their novels at the beginning... don't feel like you have to!
- Remember the old adage... good composers borrow, great composers steal. Use something you hear to give yourself a jumping off place!
- Transcribe from your list any of those small snippets you thought might make good original material, and mess around with them.
- Think about pacing... First "impact moment" should happen no more than 45 sec. in
- Think about what the focus is- both the battery, front ensemble, individual sections, etc. all need some love!
- Write in smallish chunks (~30 sec) to get feedback on whether it is heading in the right direction. It's easier to fix those things up front than after you're done!

Polishing

- As the learning process begins, pick your battles. What are the things that should be changed right off the bat? What can wait a few weeks? It's these decisions that can really make or break the success of a show!