

Berklee College of Music

## **The Making of *Fantasia***

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Music in Scoring for Films,  
Television and Video Games

Supervisor: Lucio Godoy

Advisor: Sergio Jiménez Lacima

**by Hillel Teplitzki**

Valencia Campus

July 2019



# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgement.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. The Process .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Choosing the Scene .....	2
1.2 The Composition.....	3
1.3 Feeling Stuck and Nervous .....	4
<b>2. Analysis of the piece.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 The Theme.....	7
2.2 Accompaniment and Countermelodies .....	7
<b>3. My time in London.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 In the City.....	10
3.2 Air Studios.....	10
<b>4. What is next? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Multimedia Resources .....</b>	<b>15</b>

## **Abstract**

*Fantasia* is a project which represents an entire year's worth of education at the Valencia Campus of Berklee College of Music.

To a bystander, this project could look very similar to many others we were assigned throughout the year, since it is not the first time we were asked to (potentially) choose a scene ourselves and rescore the music for it. However, the added pressure of knowing that this piece will be recorded in one of the best studios in the world combined with the knowledge that this piece is meant to represent all of our growth has turned this project into a completely new experience.

And it is without a doubt the hardest thing I ever had to experience this year, and in this intense course it is surely saying something. I will go into more detail about the effects of the added pressure, but I can honestly say now that the experience has made me grow in both confidence and in my professional attitude.

## Acknowledgement

I am extremely thankful to all the wonderful people who have helped me grow both as a musician and as a person during my time at Berklee. My fellow classmates that were always helpful and made me feel accepted, even when I would ask many questions in class.

Specifically, I would like to mention Oscar Lundberg and Srikant Krishna, who have become dear friends of mine throughout the year. Whenever I had an issue with a subject, they would sense it and offer help before I could even ask for it. And Diego Alejandro Osorio, who selflessly offered to lend me his own Mac laptop when mine broke down.

My teachers who always pushed me to my limits in many different areas, most of which I was sure at the start of the year I had no chance to grasp. Above all in this area it was Lucio Godoy who gave me the hardest time and I cannot express how thankful I am for it. I feel this attitude has prepared me greatly to the industry, and I realized thanks to it how much I can achieve when push comes to shove. I also wish to thank Pablo Schuller who introduced me to the world of mixing, which was terrifying at first.

However, Pablo made the introduction so pleasant with his humble and understanding nature. Alfons Conde, who has been so generous with his time and has revolutionized my entire approach to orchestration and composition during his time as my directed studies teacher in the first semester. Vicente Ortiz Gimeno who helped me strive for new levels of professionalism with my work.

And of course, Sergio Jiménez Lacima, who was my teacher in the second semester's directed studies, and I helped me grow not only as a musician but as a person. Every lesson with Sergio was a true pleasure and felt like a gift. I learned so much not only from his lessons but also from the many experiences he has shared. I still remember during my first lesson with Sergio, I felt I embarrassed to say that I come from Israel, because of the reputation it has.

I somewhat apologized after saying that, but Sergio said it was stupid, that I should not be embarrassed by such silly things and to have more confidence. It was not the only time

throughout the year in which Sergio helped me believe in myself, and I honestly think that he is a big part of why I can now approach clients so easily.

## Introduction

While studying at Berklee I had to completely change my workflow. I did my bachelor's degree in composition at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance which has made me accustomed to certain habits. I was used to being given months to compose a piece, and even the movies that I composed at the time were very generous with their deadlines. And most of my composition was done in Sibelius which is of course more time consuming than composing in a DAW.

Naturally when I arrived to Berklee I received quite a shock and had to find ways of adjusting myself to the new strict delivery dates. However, for the final project we were given more time than usual. This led to the amusing fact that the only two assignments I composed this year with Sibelius were the first and last. I am pleased that most of my time at Berklee was spent using many different DAWs, because I now feel I have the capacity to choose the right tool for the job. If it requires a great deal of orchestration and I am given plenty of time, I will opt for Sibelius. If time is of the essence or the emphasis is on sound design, I would choose the best DAW for the project.

I have secured an internship in Los Angeles quite early in the year, I still have many reservations towards it, and to be blunt, I have to admit I am scared and I do not know if I am certainly doing the right or smart choice. However, the portfolio I have accumulated at Berklee gives me hope, especially with *Fantasia* at the top of it. I at least believe that once I am in Los Angeles, if I do not manage to find a way to succeed, it will not be because of the low quality of my compositions. Therefore, will move forward, hope for the best and always remain optimistic.

# 1. The Process

## 1.1 Choosing the Scene

I was always drawn to the fantasy genre, and it is by no coincidence that my final project was named *Fantasia*. Added to this is the fact that this genre usually requires a big orchestra, imaginative orchestration and skilled players. Therefore, I knew from the start that this is the genre I will choose for my final project.

While choosing a genre was an easy decision, choosing the scene to rescore was much more difficult. And it was merely the first taste of all the hardship that was to come.

Pretty early in the year, I contacted Jeremy Zuckerman, a Berklee alumnus regarding the possibility of an internship. Mr. Zuckerman composed the music for the animated television show – *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, which is also my favorite show. The moment I realized he was a Berklee alumnus I had to try. Unfortunately, while he did get back to me, it never moved forward since I was not located in Los Angeles. Therefore, I considered perhaps choosing a scene from that show as an homage, and perhaps as a way to approach Zuckerman again. I remembered a specific scene that could work. The final battle of the protagonist against the main villain. The fight takes place over several landscapes and is very grandiose so I immediately thought it could work.

To my dismay, after watching the scene and asking other people for their opinion of it, it became clear that it was a bad fit. The mood of the scene stays the same for the entire duration, which means that not only I will be restricted with the type of moods I can showcase in the scene, but the piece itself will be limited and will not be able to grow.

So alas, I had to abandon this idea and look for a new one.

Not too long after, I had another idea. I am a member of many Facebook groups that are related to music, and one of them is called *Orchestration Online*. Sometimes in this group, the admins post a scene with no music to allow musicians to practice and hone their skills.



While thinking of possibilities, I suddenly remember seeing the duel scene from the fifth Harry Potter movie between Dumbledore and Voldemort. Like my previous choice. Harry Potter is my favorite book and movie franchise, and the best thing is that the duel scene has absolutely no music. Only sound effects. I cursed my stupidity for not thinking of this option sooner and the time that I wasted. This time I felt much more confident with my choice. I created a temp track for the scene and brought it to Sergio for our directed studies lesson.

During the lesson, while we were dissecting the scene Sergio commented on the fact he feels that music is definitely missing from the scene. This has made me feel like I made the perfect choice and I left the lesson feeling very confident. However, while preparing the music for the next lesson I started feeling uneasy. I started feeling the same sensation that I felt while dissecting *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. I felt once more that the majority of the scene was again dominated by one mood. It was not nearly as bad as the case with my first choice, however, the fact that this project was of such high importance, I was much more selective than I would be otherwise.

Once more I had decided to abandon my project.

At this point I was starting to get nervous. I have dedicated a lot of time to Harry Potter and I was constantly second guessing my decision to abandon it. I was frantically looking for more scenes which unlike my previous choices had a bigger range of mood and emotions. After a few days I felt very defeated and was on the verge of going back to Harry Potter. I decided to rest for a bit more and watch a show to take my mind off the situation for a short while. I heard very good things about the show *The Dragon Prince* and decided to give it a watch. To my amazement, the opening scene was everything that I was looking for and more. The scene starts with the exposition of the whole show, while the stunning animation moved between pastoral landscapes, gigantic dragons and dark magic. While researching the animation I realized that it was also done by the very same creators of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. To me this seemed like an obvious sign that I finally found my project.

## **1.2 The Composition**

My happiness sadly, was short lived. I assumed writing a 3 minute piece would not be too hard. We have done many similar projects through the year. However, every time I would try a new

melody or an harmonic progression, this voice appeared in my head that whispered: "*This is supposed to be the best piece you have ever written and you are really going with something so uninspired?*", and Sergio's delivery deadline for the complete mockup was quickly approaching.

### **1.3 Feeling Stuck and Nervous**

I think that as a composer, there are many different things I need to improve on, but I always considered my creativity to be one of my biggest strengths. I have never felt stuck before, and I did not know how to cope with this feeling, which was very frustrating at the time. I knew it was because of the added pressure, but I just could not think of a solution.

Feeling defeated, I arrived to Sergio's lesson with only third of the music completed. I discussed with him my problem and he immediately pinpointed my problem. *Inspiration*.

Unlike other projects, this time I felt so stressed and rushed, that I forgot to create a temp track for this piece or even just look for music as inspiration. Even though my scene was from a television show, Sergio and many classmates of mine gave me recommendations from video games for inspiration. The name that repeated the most was *World of Warcraft*.

From here everything changed, I immediately went on Youtube and looked for one of my favorite channels: *VgoScore*. This channel has the full score of many games, and all of those who were recommended to me were on the list. The games had so much rich music to offer, and I could feel my blockage finally disappear.

My happiness though, unfortunately, was again short lived. This time disaster has struck, and my Mac died for the second and final time during what I felt was the worst timing imaginable. I did my best not to panic and instead I asked Diego if I could borrow his computer just for a few days, which he graciously agreed to do.

Like any other project this semester, I started this project in my DAW. The first thing I did after creating the tempo map was find a main theme that I loved. To me it was one of the most important things because I knew that the theme would return through the entire piece but in different styles and moods.

While I was very happy with the main theme I chose, I was displeased with my orchestration as I felt that it was too basic. After a few days I decided to take a big gamble and switch to Sibelius since I had to return to Diego his computer and I knew I will not have access to my libraries at the labs. The gamble has fortunately paid off. Suddenly, it was so much easier to orchestrate, create counter melodies and accompaniment.

Working only in Sibelius had one big advantage, one big disadvantage. The advantage was that unlike most of my classmates, I had the score completely done the moment I finished my piece, the only thing I needed to do is review the parts to make sure they are as easy to read as they can be.

However, the big drawback of the fact that I did not have access to a DAW was that unlike other times, I did not have a good representation of how my piece will actually sound. I had access to Notepformer thanks to the labs at Berklee, and while it sounded better than normal Sibelius sounds, and I was using my imagination it was still only after my first take at Air Studios when I finally certainly knew how my piece actually sounded like.

Another thing I was a bit nervous about is the prospect of conducting my piece. I did not go crazy with my time signatures; however, they were also not standard. I do not consider myself to be a conductor. Furthermore, the optional courses that I took did not include the conducting class, so I also felt very out of shape.

Sergio calmed me down, saying that even if I do not do well, these amazing players will still play very well because they have access to both the score and the click. Even though I knew he was right I still wanted to do my best, so I contacted my classmate, Victor Josse, for help. This has proved to be a smart choice.

Only moments after seeing my score, Victor already understood completely everything that I was trying to express. Taking the time from his own practice time, he helped me improve significantly and I was feeling much more confident and excited for my session.

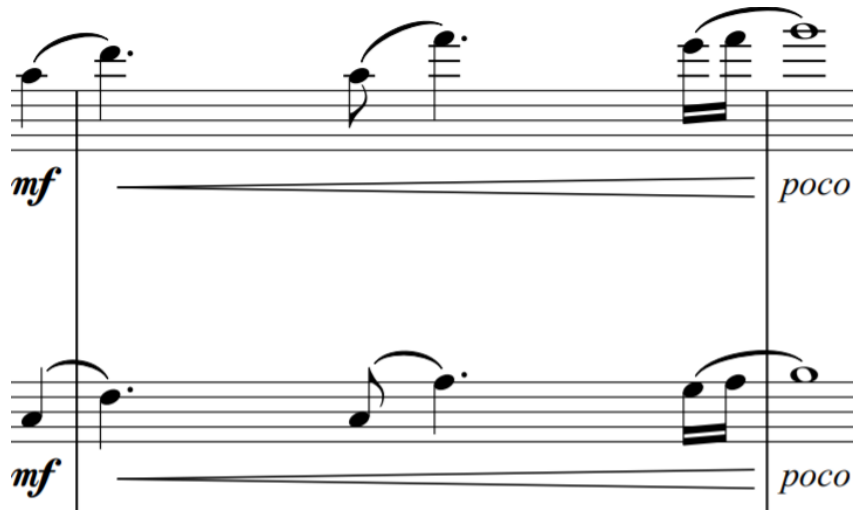
Something very important that I feel that I have to note here however is that I am very pleased that I finally had to endure the situation of feeling stuck. The fact that it did not happen in the

real world, but at Berklee where I had the support of my teachers and classmates, was beyond helpful and I now hope I will handle it much better when it happens again in the future.

## 2. Analysis of the piece

### 2.1 The Theme

My piece starts right off with the main theme being introduced. While composing it, I was trying to balance a way of making it catchy and also adding something that would make it unique as well. This is the result I came up with.



Basically all this melody contains is a broken D minor chord in 4/4 that later ends in G major. However, there is a returning principle of pickup. This makes it somewhat more distinctive while also allowing me to expand on it in my counter melodies.

This theme returns many times through the piece in many different moods.

### 2.2 Accompaniment and Countermelodies

At bar 17 the music required a big change, and so the accompaniment changed into an energetic 7/4.



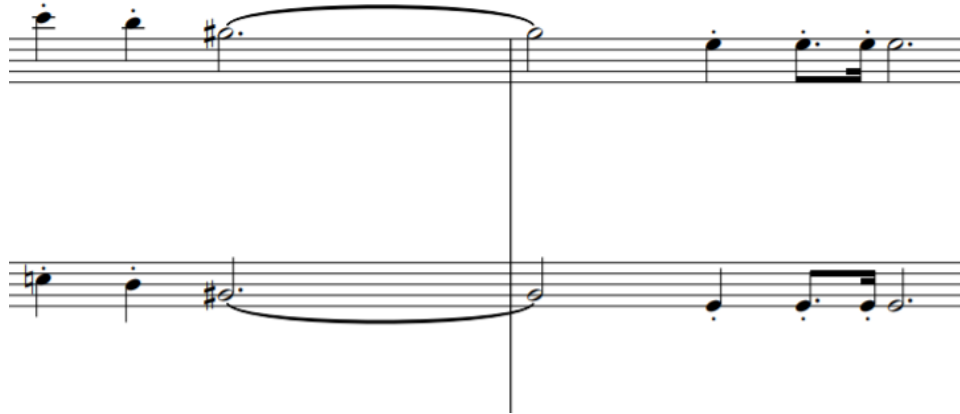
The music starts only with this accompaniment; however, it would make the piece feel too much like it is built on sections. What I hope would fix it is the return of the main theme.



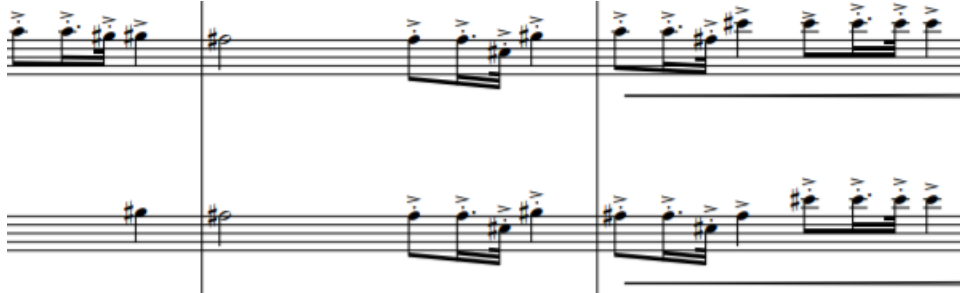
In this example, I simply changed the main theme into a 7/4. Thanks to its recognizable nature, the change is barely noticeable and the theme is easily noticed.

Another thing I did to combat the music feeling like sections and simplifying the compositional process is using every material to its fullest.

For example, through the piece I use many different countermelodies to enrich the orchestration.



This is a counter melody that I added to intensify the situation. Normally, I would just use it for this one location and move on. This time I took the end of the counter melody and reused it for the duration of the entire closing section of the piece, while passing it from different sections of the orchestra.



Taking small musical ideas and expanding on them later in the piece is something I have done many times through the piece and I hope it made it feel whole and complete.

## **3. My time in London**

### **3.1 In the City**

My time in London was torn between trying to balance out three different groups. Pretty early in the year I was fortunate to be one of the three students in our class to be assigned a personal mentor. I was assigned Vasco Hexel, of the Royal College of Music. Vasco did his best to connect me with many composers and students of his, was gracious enough to allow me to come to the Air Studios recording of their alumnus Nathan Stornetta and even offered to have a cup of coffee with me.

Besides this, my entire family happened to be in London at this time. So, I had to try and manage my time between networking, family and hanging out with my classmates who I knew I will not be able to be with for much longer.

### **3.2 Air Studios**

This has kept me so busy that I did not even have the time to be nervous about my recording. I was also very pleased with my assigned time slot. It was right after the morning's tea break, so the musicians are already warm but not tired. When I finally stood on the podium, I finally started feeling the nervousness creep on me. However, having Jake Jakeson in my ears, together with my teachers, immediately calmed me down, as I knew I was in the most capable hands I could hope for.

The conducting part went very smoothly, having the bar numbers in front of your face makes it very difficult to lose yourself in the piece. I quickly switched the conducting into autopilot mode and completely focused on listening to the music. Furthermore, the fact that the musicians were so polite and understanding made the experience very pleasant and quite enjoyable.

Besides my own session, I was also asked by Rahul, Srikant and Oscar to produce their sessions. At first, I was a bit disappointed as I heard from my classmates that barely any student says a word since there are such big experts in the room. Luckily enough, I believe the fact that the four of us shared our pieces many times during the creation part has made me very familiar with their



compositions. Therefore, during all the sessions I managed to give constructive feedback that was of help and made me feel like I earned my spot in the booth.

## 4. What is next?

My experiences in Israel quickly made me realize that you could be a great composer but if you do not know how to approach your potential clients, be a pleasant person and how to behave professionally, your compositional prowess did not matter. While I knew these things, I still lacked the confidence in myself and in my music to achieve any of them. During my time in the academy, I was not an exceptional student. I was average at best, and the teachers were sure to remind me that with their behavior.

When I first arrived at Berklee I had many doubts about my ability to compare with my classmates. I felt that my compositional knowledge was decent, my technological knowledge was atrocious and the only thing going for me is that I am pretty good when interacting with people, a fact that has nothing to do with music.

The teachers at Berklee are definitely the reason I feel this is not the case anymore. During my time at Berklee, I felt I was truly given the tools to improve. After that I was chosen to be my classes student representative, I was chosen (as I had mentioned before) to be assigned a personal mentor, and I also earned a place on the Dean's list for excellent academic performance during the Spring semester. All these achievements have finally helped me gain more confidence and believe that when I approach clients, I actually have something of substance to offer them.

During this year, I put a big emphasis on networking. While I was conversing with the Berklee alumnus Xueran Chen, he offered to put me in touch with Andrew Gross, the composer which Xueran interned for after his time at Berklee. I took him up on his offer and asked him to make the connection. After he assured me that he did, I contacted Andrew via email. I waited a week and still had no reply.

Now, if this situation happened before my time at Berklee, I would just assume that this was his way of showing that he is simply not interested, and I would have let the whole thing go out of fear of being a bother. Luckily, during my lessons with Sergio, he urged me to never give up after the first email, and always send at least three before giving up completely. And because of this tip I secured an internship with Andrew.

I sent another email, expressing a polite concern that my email might have gotten lost in his spam filter. This time I received an immediate reply from Andrew. He apologized for not getting back to me sooner, stating that he was simply swamped with work. Afterwards, he said that he might actually be looking for an intern around the time I graduate, however, that he cannot take me only because of Xueran's recommendation and that he would like to set up an interview. I obviously agreed.

At the start of the interview I noticed that Andrew seemed a bit cold, however, the more time we spent together, the happier he seemed to become. By the end of the interview we were joking around, after which he said that he has a good feeling about me and that I am hired.

I was shocked to be hired before even presenting my music, but I immediately agreed. The internship starts on August 26th, however since it is only half time, I am looking for more possible work as well.

So far, I have already started work on two very promising video games. I remember seeing the pleasant surprise on Sergio's face when I shared with him the news and it was one of my happiest moments at Berklee.

Right now, I am also considering the process of applying for an artist visa. The career center at Berklee paired me up with a lawyer. She believed that I had everything necessary to apply for the visa, however I am still hesitant because of the price of it.

Not only that, it is a very big risk to apply for one, as paying the big sum does not guarantee to you anything. Alfons warned me especially of investing in the wrong lawyer, as the result can be disastrous.

I applied for the Berklee fellowship which offers to financially support student's internships, right now I am eagerly awaiting a reply as the result can be life changing. However, no matter the result, I will keep my head high and remain optimistic for the future.

## **Conclusion**

I now finally have the time to breath and reflect upon this passing year. There is so much that I am grateful for. I remember when I first heard I was accepted to Berklee, I was very unsure whether I should go or not. I knew I would enjoy the experience, however I had doubts about how much I could improve in only one year.

Now after this year has passed though, I can say without a doubt that choosing to come here was one of the best decisions I have ever made, and I believe the person I am now is completely person from the person who arrived one year ago. While it is sad that I have to say goodbye to all the wonderful friends I have made this year I know that fortunately, these days, the world is so much better connected and I will do my best to keep in touch with both my classmates and my teachers.

My time at Berklee was a wonderful adventure and now in its conclusion, I can honestly say I feel equipped with all the necessary tools to move on and continue to a brand-new adventure.

## Multimedia Resources

1. Brower, Russell Warcraft Suite. <https://vgoscore.com/>
2. Hexel, Vasco. Official Website <http://www.vascohexel.com/>
3. Pyotr Ilyich, Tchaikovsky. Symphony no. 4 <https://imslp.org/>
4. Amon, Ryan. Lady Maria <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mByDcrNSV0>