

CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

THESIS PAPER

Over the roofs of London, “Flying to Neverland”

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INTRODUCTION

Arriving in Valencia – new territories, new people, new challenges

Before I discuss the musical challenges that this new year at Berklee would create, I would like to discuss certain issues and worries that were related to my arrival in a new city, a place full of strangers. I will always remember the start of this year as being extremely stressful and worrying. Not only based on the fact that I was isolated from everything I previously knew, but also coping from the result of distance from family, from friends, from a zone of comfort. Dealing with solitude is not easy and as days passed, my longing for companionship grew. Being in Valencia played an additional role in my adjustment to this new environment: discovering this city, its life, its moods, and getting to know its customs were challenges in themselves.

Once the year at Berklee began, I had to face new challenges such as learning how to organize my week according to a new and intense workflow, as well also bonding and meeting people from all over the world. The latter was not easy at first, although it is an interesting process to witness the creation of new relationships. While some of us may have shared a similar country or come from the same culture, we had different influences in our lives. Despite our differences, we were united by the same passion music, with special interest for film music: this was the foundation of the friendships that were to come, and little by little, the kind of uneasy conversations turned into moments of fun and true sharing. I am always amazed to see how people connect with each other. This is a very beautiful thing to see.

As the year began and the work came spontaneously to us, I discovered a new and very personal challenge in the fact of dealing with technology. I realized that this unique year

would not be only about writing music, I would also have to really challenge myself, not relying solely on my past experiences and previous knowledge but would have to go beyond pure composition.

I. BEYOND COMPOSITION: THE CHALLENGES OF FILM MUSIC

I. 1) Writing *for* media

I. 1) a. Dealing with new technological tools: DP and the world of MIDI sequencing

Coming from a very traditional and classical background where I worked hard on my playing, analyzing and writing abilities, I was not fully prepared to face the vast world of MIDI sequencing and the anxiety related to the new technological frontiers I had to explore and understand. Indeed, I felt all these new tools and complex territories to be like a land I had never explored before, with rules I didn't completely understand and a language that was new to me. Fortunately, my knowledge of music and film contributed to me better understanding how to best utilize these new tools.

I am thankful that the teachers encouraged us to practice with these tools, and to become better acquainted with them as fast as possible, as almost every assignment was supposed to utilize them. Generally speaking, our learning process was progressive before we actually had to synchronize music to a piece of film. I feel that this was the most productive method in which to teach us the information.

I was encouraged by learning that many of the students in our class had never had to use a software such as Digital Performer – a software that many of us found almost barbaric at first – as a result, I didn't feel that I was far behind my colleagues. The rules implied by this software were hard to follow for those who were used to composing with Logic or Cubase.

This was a new land for many, including myself, who had never used a software more complex than Finale to write music before.

I. 1) b. Music *for* a media: giving priority to the images and story, illustrating a mood

One of the main lessons of this year was to understand that our job as film composers is not to only write music only but to write music *for* a media, this media being a master or a guide that we are never to forget or ignore to the simple benefit of our music. The story, the characters, the images, the angles and movements of the camera, the light and the rhythm of the scene are all factors that are meant to drive our music. The end goal is to play with these constraints and manage to write something as interesting and unique as possible.

In order to achieve that, it is of the utmost importance to know how to read a film, and this is where a class like *Narrative analysis* came into play, in addition to any personal practice, reading, cultural knowledge, and in my case, my previous studies in literature and cinema theory. Our training is not only about this one year master program, rather our training has started long before this year, and is meant to last as long as possible after.

A film composer has to know the cinema vocabulary in order to understand his/her job. It is critical in order to know how to communicate with cinema professionals, as this communication may sometimes be complex sometimes since the language of music has its own rules.

I. 1) c. Learning how to synchronize music with pictures

Although I had some experience in analyzing narrative and/or visual content and applying it to a piece of music to it, I learnt even more this year on how to read a film and find what needs to be emphasized musically, thus the quest of sync points and how to make them as accurate and meaningful as possible.

Aside from identifying sync points, there is also a purely technological aspect of this process of synchronizing music to picture. For this step, Digital Performer (DP) is extremely helpful. Truly, there are wonders in technology, I would be a hypocrite no to say so. While I cannot speak for other software's features, DP has a fantastic "Find tempo" tool. Using this tool has made me realize how comfortable it is to work with a steady tempo throughout a scene, especially in the context of a short recording session. We will discuss this further in the next part. While helpful, this steadiness comes with its own difficulty: how to avoid being still and boring. I was also faced with this challenge for my final recording, but this is another story.

I. 2) Learning the ropes of live recording: A one-year ticket to London

I. 2) a. Dealing with more technological tools: Protocols and the world of music recording/editing/mixing

From the very first recording session, we had to prepare a Protocols session. As many others, I could not help but feel a bit anxious with the idea of creating and submitting this session, I worried about forgetting one of the many important details (rulers, click properly printed, big counter visible, *etc.*), and hoped that everything worked perfectly. These worries were further accentuated when the time of our first remote recording with Budapest came. Since we were supposed to send away all our material, it had to be perfect.

In the end, although I don't want to become a sound engineer, I am glad we had the opportunity to learn more about the basics of recording, mixing and editing techniques. These are skills any film composer should know. Indeed, we never know if a film budget will allow us to hire an engineer, or if we will have to do it ourselves.

I. 2) b. Management of time in a recording session: the 18 minutes challenge

Management of time is crucial in a recording context; this is one of the biggest challenges we had to deal with in this context. During my first recording session, surprisingly

I had quite a good time management, as I was able to do several full takes and still had time to spare. Perhaps this was because the piece was easy. I also realized it is better not to have tempo changes but to create a feeling of tempo change through rhythmic variations.

At the end of the day, we have to remember that “time is money”.

I. 2) c. Practice of conducting

Learning the basics of conducting was one of the things I was looking forward to the most this year at Berklee, and I was far from being disappointed. Once again, my first recording was a positive experience. We had the chance to conduct the recording, and despite having the click in the headphones, I was happy to see the players were actually paying attention to me. I recognize that my presence was not really essential, but it was an opportunity for us to practice conducting and to be something more than a metronome. Conducting the following sessions felt better and better to me. I was able to hear more of what was happening, not only focusing on my conducting, but also showing some dynamism and intentions in my gestures, *etc.* The experience of a conductor is also a way to be in direct contact with the players, which, as we later learnt, can be a difficult issue to deal with.

I. 2) d. Dealing with musicians: the roles and approaches of the composer / conductor / producer

My recording of a brass quintet was an example of a situation where I did not have a particularly comfortable relationship with the players performing my piece.

While other students had trouble with a trumpet player for example, I was not particularly concerned with him (even though his playing could have been more “involved”). On the other hand, I had trouble with the tuba player: he was a very good player, but that day, he kept doing time mistakes and playing out of tune. In the end, we still managed to get good takes for almost all the parts of my piece, but we lost a precious amount of time with these mistakes.

I recognize that the players are very important to the piece, and this kind of situation may happen in the professional life. While not ideal, this was at least an opportunity for me to learn how to deal with professional instrument players in an uncomfortable situation, and how to deal with short timing. Also, it is important that they feel comfortable with the piece and the conductor. In order to achieve that, we have to behave as professionally and respectfully as possible towards the team involved (players, producers, engineers).

I. 2) e. Writing a score: importance of the precision and quality of the writing

I am very used to writing scores, and this has given me an advantage in that domain, by allowing me to focus on different issues, such as composition with a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) like Digital Performer. For example, the piece I wrote for my first Budapest recording was the first one I composed entirely using DP; the music was simpler but really attached to the images, the textures, the harmony and melody (but I'm always attached to that). Although, I still feel much more comfortable and confident when I write with a score in front of my eyes, I feel reassured by the fact that I can compose music without seeing an actual score and using a DAW.

My second Budapest recording was significant as it demonstrated how good writing can help the recording to go smoothly. Nothing in particular happened and the orchestra did a great performance from the very first take. I believe this was caused by the precision of the writing. I tried to be as idiomatic as possible, to write not too complicated music, and to submit the score and parts as clearly as possible. As my CE will demonstrate later, a precise orchestration combined with careful score preparation, are essential elements to secure an easy recording.

I. 2) f. Composing for an orchestra: the importance of knowing the instruments

When the moment comes to write a piece for an orchestra, one should never neglect the fact that writing idiomatically for all of the instruments playing is the best way to get a

solid and coherent performance. In addition, this method helps avoid questions and problems during the recording, and therefore saves time. In this matter, beginning our orchestration course this year with a presentation of all the instruments composing an orchestra was a good way to give every student some basis in orchestral writing. As a string player myself, I had the chance to develop my orchestral knowledge years before Berklee, but I would not be honest if I said I didn't learn anything new. Despite this slight advantage, I still learned new things in the orchestration course, and was able to consolidate these new knowledge into my musical journey.

II. CONCEIVING THE FINAL COMPOSITION PROJECT

II. 1) Early ideas

Very early in the year, I started to think about what shape I would like to give my Culminating Experience, not even considering a visual media at first. I remember walking my way back home every day singing or whistling, shaping in my mind ideas that, I hoped, would be transcended by the amazing orchestra we would have the chance to conduct in June. One of the first ideas I had was to write a theme for a movie villain. I have always loved villains in stories; I find them fascinating, and very often they receive memorable themes by film composers.

I can recall many of the themes John Williams has written for villains such as Darth Vader, Lex Luthor, Voldemort, *etc.* John Williams is a master in composing themes, and what he writes for villains is usually very efficient. Let's take "Darth Vader's theme", from *Star Wars episode V* (1980) for example, and try to understand why it works so well. First, it is an

ostinato-based theme, the ostinato being located in the string section from the beginning to the end (Figure 1).

The image shows a musical score for 'Ala Marcia' with a tempo of quarter note = 112. It features five staves for string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. Each staff contains a complex, rhythmic ostinato pattern. The score is divided into two measures, with a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a second ending bracket labeled '2'. The music is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic and includes various articulation marks like accents and slurs.

Fig. 1: “The Imperial March” ostinato

This ostinato is a signature elements of the piece that makes it instantly recognizable. Additionally, the percussion reinforcing the strings (timpani, snare drum) makes it even more powerful. An ostinato is a great way to make a piece memorable, as John Williams proved it again with his “Duel Of The Fates” from *Star Wars episode I* (1999).

The theme he wrote for Darth Vader is quite simple and easy to remember as well due to its repetitive rhythm (Figure 2) around which Williams builds his melody.

The image shows a single staff of music for 'Darth Vader's Theme'. The melody is simple and repetitive, consisting of a series of eighth and quarter notes. Two segments of the melody are highlighted with red rectangular boxes.

Fig. 2: Darth Vader’s Theme

This theme takes the form of a March (as indicated by the title of the piece – “The Imperial March” – and its tempo indication), which gives it a sense of “unlimited power” (innocent quote from *Star Wars*) and corresponds perfectly to a character who seems

unstoppable and made of pure evil. It is interesting to notice how Williams uses the March form to compose his villain's themes (Lex Luthor's and Voldemort's are also Marches).

Finally, Williams chose not to keep the harmony not overtly complex, which suits the form of the piece. Still, he managed to keep it interesting by avoiding the I-V-I chord progression that would be expected from a March, and changing the V into a minor bVI (as we can see on the last beat of the first and second bars in Figure 1). This chord progression is not original in itself, but it surely participates to making this theme unique and recognizable.

Following a similar guideline, I really considered writing such a theme for a while. But I also had another idea.

I have been fascinated by the character and the story of Peter Pan for years now. Despite only having read James Barrie's novel for the first time a few years ago, it had a huge impact on me. I studied it in depth and tried to understand what made it so special and fascinating. I also used it as a musical inspiration for some of my other works. In 2014, I wrote a full symphonic suite called "Suite Neverland", based on the story of the boy who would never grow up. In general, I'm very interested in fairy tales and how they help shape our understanding of the world; in literature, this was the subject of my thesis during my research studies, and musically, I am driven by wanting to learn how to make music out of those fairy tales.

Having the chance to compose the soundtrack for a *Peter Pan* movie adaptation is a dream of mine. It only seemed logical to me to make it part of my CE at the beginning of the year. I decided to focus especially on the first flight scene of the story, as flight scenes are usually central scenes in almost any fantasy movie.

II. 2) Tempting projects

II. 2) a. Meeting the animation world

A few months ago, I went to Paris to receive a prize called “Le Prix de la Vocation”, meant to award and help financially twenty young people to achieve their life vocation, in any domain. I had the chance to meet fascinating persons, and among them was a student from Les Gobelins, a Parisian animation school. We were interested in each other’s work, and I told him about my final project at Berklee. I thought that maybe it would be great to record a score for a short film he created in Air Studios, giving both of us the opportunity to work in professional conditions.

In the end, we couldn’t carry out this project because it was difficult for him to create a short animation film in such a short amount of time, and he didn’t have anything else ready. But we still are very interested in working together in the future, starting next year, so this meeting and our initial idea was not in vain.

II. 2) b. Building a movie around its music

Another exciting project came from a friend of mine, Stéphane Le Roux. He is a cinema teacher and with whom I had the opportunity to work in the past years, scoring two of the three movies he has created with his students in almost professional conditions. When I mentioned to him this final recording in London and what was expected from me as a composer, he told me about his desire to write a script about composing a soundtrack while telling an intimate and personal story. His idea was to go backwards and build a movie around the composition of its soundtrack. The film would have two timelines, one in “reality” with a student in film scoring and his/her teacher, the other being the timeline of the movie these characters would be writing. This concept of a movie within a movie was very exciting to me, all the more so as the second timeline would be located in Brocéliande Forest, a place from my region which is full of legends, tales and mysteries, holding stories about Merlin, magic

and powerful fairies (Figure 3). This setting was another motivation, as it would give the possibility to write a score using colours and melodies inspired by my region in France.

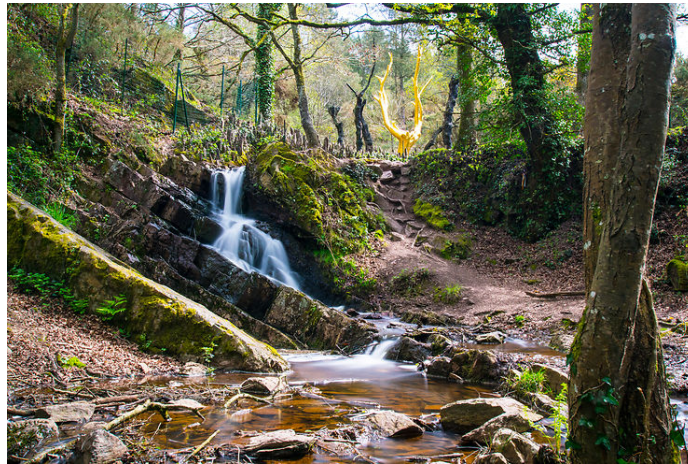


Fig. 3: The Golden Tree in Brocéliande Forest

Given the time we had, the plan changed from having the film shot and ready before London to composing the music on the script only. But as time passed, we faced an important issue concerning the music itself: how could a big orchestral soundtrack fit a kind of intimate short movie? We could not find any satisfying solution, and the project was sadly aborted, although Stéphane and I both think that we could give it a chance in the future, with a less Hollywoodian soundtrack.

This new aborted project led me back to a previous idea which I finally decided to choose as my CE.

II. 3) Back to a very personal and early idea: Scoring a Peter Pan movie

II. 3) a. Creating a script out of a book

Coming back to *Peter Pan*, I decided to avoid rescoring a scene from an existing movie adaptation of Barrie's novel, as I wanted to allow myself musical freedom and not to care about any copyright issue. The solution was for me to write a script based directly on the novel. This adaptation was an interesting task that allowed me to take some advantage of my

literature and cinema studies. Moreover, by writing this script myself, I could choose my own images and my own sequences, in which I could introduce specific ingredients such as action, fantasy, wonder, *etc.*

In order to create a cinematographic scene, I had to work on a certain dynamism in thought process the scene, I also had to keep in mind some visuals elements, and above all, a coherent structure that would become precisely the structure of my musical piece.

Here is the final version of the script:

Peter Pan – The Flight Scene

INT./EXT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Peter Pan flies through the window and draws Wendy, John and Michael to him with his malicious words.

PP : “Do you want to meet mermaids ? “

Wendy: “Oh !”

PP: “Indians?”

J and M: “Really ? Indians ?!”

PP: “Pirates?”

Children: “Pirates ?!!...”

They all follow him as a sudden (1:00:17:00).

EXT. ABOVE LONDON – NIGHT

They fly over London's roofs and towers, make a circle around Big Ben's tower.

After following Peter, John and Michael start a race to challenge each other (1:00:37:16).

They suddenly pass through a cloud (1:00:42:13).

EXT. ABOVE THE SEA – SUNRISE

After a few seconds of uncertainty, they emerge in the sunrise, above the sea (1:00:46:14).

They are amazed, Peter is proud.

Peter dives towards the sea. He almost touches the surface of water while flying. He flies among jumping dolphins (1:01:06:01), then catches up with the others (1:01:18:15).

EXT. TIMELAPSE

On the same shot, we see the children flying as the sun goes down, the moon rises, then the sun comes back and goes down, as the landscape changes to mountains.

EXT. ABOVE MOUNTAINS – SUNSET

Michael falls asleep in the sunset, surrounded by delicate snowflakes. Suddenly he literally starts falling (1:01:47:00). Wendy screams. Peter laughs, but then he dives again after Michael who is falling towards the mountains.

Peter catches Michael just before he hits a summit (1:02:02:20), and while holding him he flies up again, extremely fast, into the night sky.

Wendy sees them coming.

W: “John, hold me !!!”

John obeys. As Peter and Michael pass by them, she catches Michael’s feet.

They all fly extremely fast towards the stars, at whom Peter is giving his biggest smile.

Light goes brighter, everything is blurred and Wendy has to close her eyes.

EXT. NEVERLAND – SUNRISE

Suddenly they emerge into the sunrise light (1:02:13:18), and progressively appears the wonderful Neverland.

The children stare in wonder and we are given a fantastic view of the island.

They fly through the clouds above the island and contemplate all of its wonders.

Flying above the pirates' ship, they hide quickly behind a cloud (1:02:40:12).

They keep flying towards the land.

II. 3) b. Creating visuals

When I finished the script, I had this idea of a story-board that would go with it and help the listener of the piece to understand what actions and emotions are underlined by the music. Also, I felt it would bring my project closer to a cinematographic experience.

Therefore, I contacted a visual artist, Lawrence Lamborn, who is a musician and an illustrator and asked if he would be interested in drawing a series of images going with my script, focusing on some of its key actions or key locations. I knew his style would fit perfectly with my project, with interesting colours, a comics style, hidden details, and fine lines. I was happy to receive a positive response, and in the end the result was exactly what I expected.

Lawrence created five original drawings, out of five moments of my script: the children flying over the roofs of London (Figure 4), Peter flying with the dolphins (Figure 5), Michael falling (Figure 6), Peter and the children flying towards the stars (Figure 7), and finally a view of Neverland (Figure 8).

Here are the five drawings.



Fig. 4: the children flying over the roofs of London



Fig. 5: Peter flying with dolphins.



Fig. 6: Michael falling.



Fig. 7: Peter and the children flying towards the stars



Fig. 8: Neverland

After receiving all the drawings, I edited them in a sort of short animation movie, to add even more precision to my idea of the whole sequence, like an animated story-board. This “animation” would be used to present my final project.

II. 3) c. The ingredients of a flying scene

When the moment came to start composing, I had to think of the kind of ingredients that such a scene would require to sound right and evoke a flying sequence in the listener’s mind. When you listen to the musical underscoring of famous flying scenes such as the one from *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* or *Superman*, not to mention various *Peter Pan* movie adaptations, one of the first ingredients to be noticed is movement, which may seem obvious considering the type of scene we are talking about. However, it is pivotal as it creates movement/motion that is not always obvious. These amazing scores provide movement through a thoughtful use of the accompaniment parts (ostinato in the strings for example, a good choice of speed, fast values, punctuation elements, *etc.*). I wanted to recreate that feeling.

In my piece, I decided to use a constant tempo (except for the very end), following the idea, that I discussed earlier, that it always makes a recording session go smoother. However, I didn’t want this constant tempo to make my piece sound motionless and still. How could I create motion and variety despite of this constant tempo?

One idea was to play with ternary and binary forms. My piece is mostly ternary (bar of 9/8) but there is this one section illustrating the race between John and Michael where I chose to switch into binary (4/4). The quarter note value remains the same but the general pace seems a little accelerated because of the arrival of 16th notes (Figure 9).

The image shows a musical score for strings and woodwinds. The top part of the score (strings) is in 4/4 time, with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The bottom part (woodwinds) is in 4/4 time, with dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the strings and woodwinds playing in 4/4 time. The second system shows the strings and woodwinds playing in 2/4 time, indicated by the change in the time signature.

Fig. 9: switching to binary (bars 30-33)

Another way to emulate dynamism in a constant tempo was to add time signature changes in some places in order to move the strong beats, or to manipulate these strong beats within the bars by creating “in 2” patterns in 3-beats bars (Figure 10).

The image shows a musical score for woodwinds and brass. The score is in 3/4 time. A section of the score (bars 37-42) is highlighted with a red box and a blue circle, indicating “in 2” patterns in 3-beat bars. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Piccolo (Pic.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bn.), Horn (FH), Trumpet (Trp.), and Trombone (Trb.). The dynamic markings range from *mp* to *pp*. The “in 2” patterns are indicated by a red box and a blue circle around the notes in the highlighted section.

Fig. 10: “in 2” patterns (bars 37-42)

In this example, we can see that the fast pattern played by the oboes and clarinets goes along with the bassoon and horns line to create a floating time signature. Both presenting a regular motif that works every two beats. Also, I used the dovetailing technique for the woodwinds and made it appear every time the pattern repeats itself twice.

In general, I tried to play with the beats, and particularly around the downbeat which I set out to avoid constantly throughout the piece, by holding bass lines and making them start on the second beat (Figure 11).

This musical score snippet covers measures 2 through 8. A red rectangular box highlights measures 5 and 6. In measure 5, there is a dynamic marking of *p* and a *mp* marking. Above the staff, there are markings for '(Regular mallets)' and 'Bass drum'. The score shows various woodwind parts with notes and rests, and a percussion part with a bass drum. The bottom of the page shows measure numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

This musical score snippet covers measures 17 through 21. A red rectangular box highlights measure 19. In measure 19, there is a dynamic marking of *p* and a *f* marking. Above the staff, there is a marking for 'Hard mallets'. The score shows various woodwind parts with notes and rests, and a string part with 'arco' markings. The bottom of the page shows measure numbers 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.

Fig. 11: Avoiding the downbeat

By doing so, the idea was to give a sense of bounce, of rebound, as though you were taking flight. After all, the first beat of a bar is usually felt as a *down* beat, and I wanted to contrast this with a sense of going upwards. The ostinato is also based on that accentuated second beat, and always leads into the subsequent bar.

I mentioned motion as the main ingredient of a flight scene. Like in every famous flying scene from the movies that I previously evoked (*E.T.*, *Superman*, *Peter Pan*), this kind of scene is also the perfect moment for a majestic main theme.

II. 3) c. Building the 2 main themes

As a composer, I always prefer start a composition by working on one or several themes. I strongly believe themes and melodies to be what is mainly remembered from a piece of music, while also allowing the composer to work on both harmonic and melodic variations, while keeping the score coherent. Themes are perfect tools to tell a story, and I like to make them one of the core concepts in the music I write. My piece “Flying to Neverland” was no exception.

For this piece, I decided to compose two main themes, one called the “Flying Theme”, to accompany the flight of the characters above the rooftops of London, above the sea and the mountains, to the stars and to the island of Neverland. The other theme depicts the wonders of their destination. Although I have two themes, I still wanted them to be connected and related, having one preparing the other, always in order to preserve a coherence of the piece. The solution I found was to include a common rhythmic cell in the core of both of the themes (Figure 12).

The image shows two musical staves, A and B, with a common rhythmic cell highlighted in red boxes. Staff A, titled "A. Flying Theme", is for Violin I and II (VI. I and VI. II). It features a melody with a common rhythmic cell (a quarter note followed by an eighth note beamed to a quarter note) highlighted in red boxes. Staff B, titled "B. Neverland Theme", is for Violin I (VI. I) and features a similar rhythmic cell highlighted in red boxes. Red arrows point from the boxes in staff A to the boxes in staff B, indicating the connection between the two themes.

Fig. 12: Connecting my two main themes

Once the two themes were connected, it allowed me a multitude of variations. I could use this central cell in many parts of the piece, in order to create dialogue between the instruments or to facilitate transitions between different sections.

My Flying Theme was the most important to me because I knew I would utilize it more than the second one, so concentrated my efforts perfecting this theme. I recalled an interview of John Williams explaining how he composed his Flying Theme for the movie *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, as a theme that would fly with the characters, a theme that would create an ascending movement with target notes getting higher and higher. I always found this idea brilliant, and I tried to make this concept the core idea to my own theme. I intended to create an ascending movement, in two ways: first, the melody itself goes higher and higher

(Figure 13), secondly, I mimic this harmonically by following the ascending movement of the melody with parallel triads. Harmonically moving upwards while the pedal note remains on C, the main tonality, creating interesting dissonances and avoiding a simple harmonic progression (Figure 14).

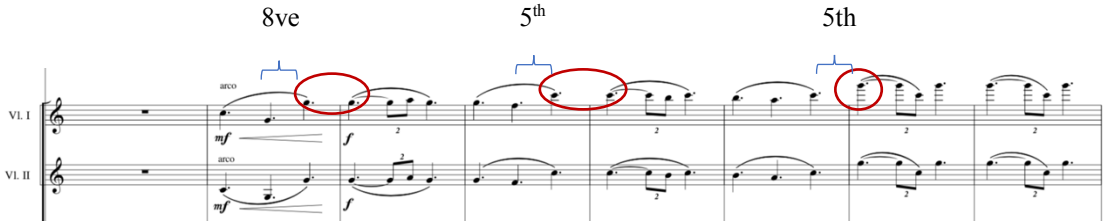


Fig. 13: a flying theme

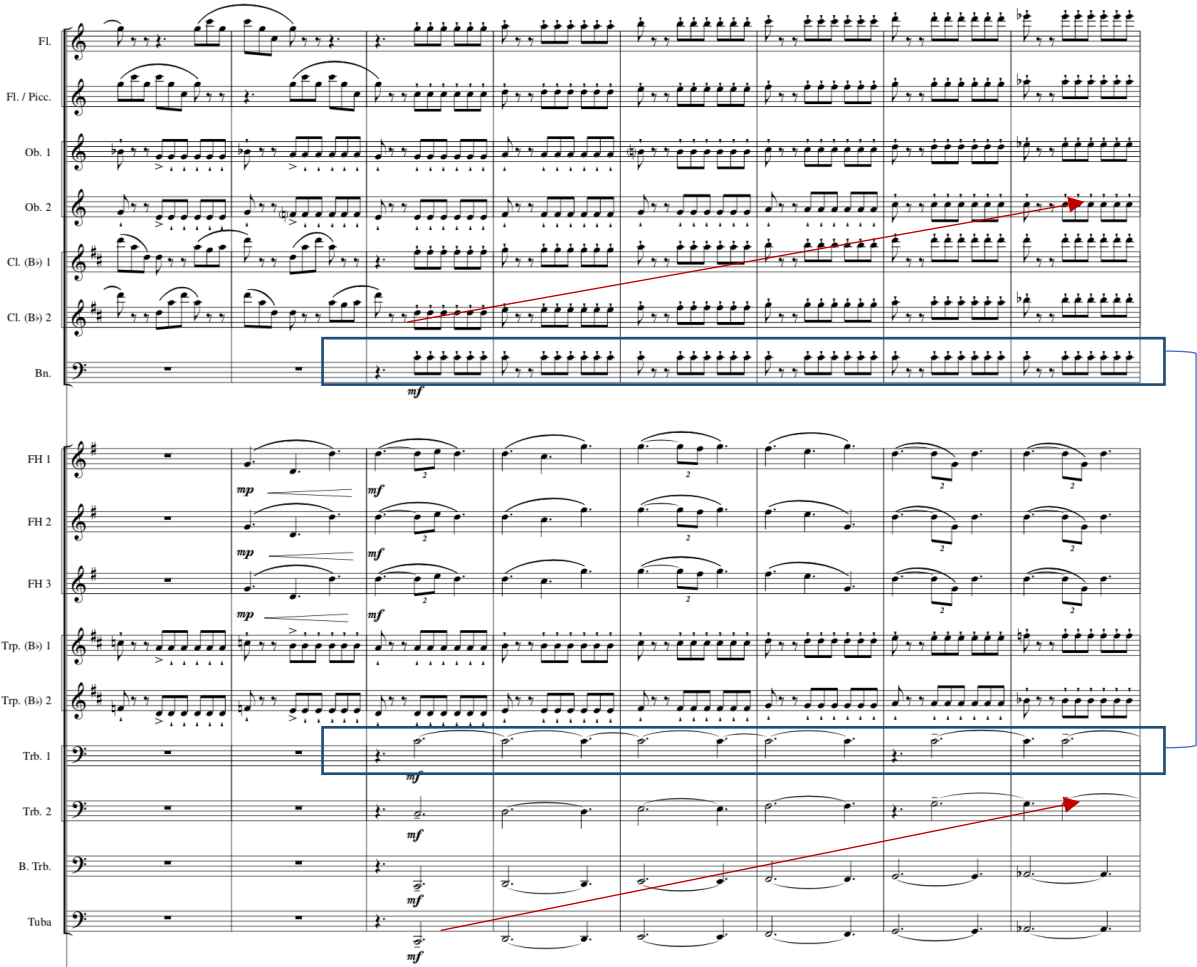


Fig. 14: a supporting ascending harmony

Since the main theme is meant to have an upward motion, in addition to the target notes getting higher and higher and to the harmony that follows an ascending line, I also used ascending intervals that would convey the same feeling of elevation (an octave up, a fifth up, then another fifth up) (Figure 13). The first bar in itself is supposed to launch the theme thanks to this initial octave, like a bird propelling itself. This theme is contrasted with a secondary theme I wrote for the falling sequence, where the melody clearly goes down, before ascending again which exemplifies when Peter catches Michael and saves him (bars 91 to 97).

My second main theme, the one for Neverland, is not meant to be as melodic as the first one. I was more interested in suggesting a majestic nature to the theme. It is the arrival to the island, the end of the journey, and the children are awe struck. Therefore, the melodic line is quite static (though based on the same rhythmic cell as before), whereas the harmonic structure follows the same idea as in the Flying Theme, with parallel triads going up then down while creating a pleasant dissonance with the pedal point of C in the melody (Figure 15).

The image displays a musical score for the 'Neverland Theme' across two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 109 to 116, and the second system covers measures 117 to 120. The staves are labeled: VI. I (Violin I), VI. II (Violin II), Vla. (Viola), Vcl. (Violoncello), and Cb. (Contrabasso). The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (mf, f, ff), articulation (Div., Unis.), and performance instructions (lento). Red boxes highlight specific melodic lines in the Violin I and Violoncello parts. Red arrows point to specific notes in the Violoncello part, likely indicating the 'pedal point of C' mentioned in the text.

Fig. 15: Neverland Theme

Although this theme only appears in its entirety at the end of the piece, when Peter and the children reach the island, it doesn't feel unprepared because we find common elements between the two main themes. This has a direct narrative relation since the ability to fly is intrinsically related to this wonderful island and its magical inhabitants. Although I had stated this theme once, before the actual arrival to the island, when Peter flies with the dolphins. It was done in a kind of a hidden way as only the celli are playing it and many other musical elements are happening at the same time, forcing the listener's attention to move constantly from one element to the other (Figure 16).

The image shows a musical score for five string parts: Violin I (VI. I), Violin II (VI. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score spans measures 53 to 58. A red rectangular box highlights the cello part (Vlc.) from measure 56 to 58, which contains the main melodic motif of the Neverland Theme. The score includes various dynamics such as *mf*, *mp*, *p*, and *pizz.*, and performance instructions like *arco* and *poco*. Measure numbers 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, and 58 are indicated at the bottom of the score.

Fig. 16: foreshadowing Neverland Theme

II. 3) d. Orchestration

One key element I wanted to incorporate in my orchestration was the idea of motion. I wanted to avoid immobility in my orchestration, meaning I didn't want my melodies to be played always by the same instruments and the accompaniment to be played always by the same instruments, I wanted them to have a constant dialogue and create lots of timbre combinations.

I had many influences that helped me working on my orchestration, though not always consciously. I would say that I tried to combine the brilliance of a John Williams with colours and textures borrowed from great symphonists of the XXth Century. As an example, I could mention the British Ralph Vaughan-Williams and his "Fantasy on a Theme by Thomas

Tallis” which may have influenced the suddenly quiet sequence of my piece (bars 76 to 86) in its way of connecting a very loud sequence with a very quiet one. As an aside, I would like to mention the immense impact Williams’ music has had on me and how much his music has and continues to always inspire me.

In general, I built my script with the aim of providing possibility to structure my piece in a way that I could deliver different orchestral moods, and to force myself to work on transitions and an overall coherence.

II. 3) e. Revision: “The devil is in the details”

One final word dedicated to Sergio J. Lacima, who was my tutor and advisor this last semester, and whose help was invaluable while I was working on my composition, and even before. A core concept that he instilled in me during this process was the attention to detail that I needed to commit to my piece. While I was working with him, I constantly had this saying in mind: “The devil is in the details”. I want to acknowledge how helpful and patient Sergio was with me, especially when I dared bringing him an extracted audio from Finale (may he forgive me one day).

CONCLUSION

One year ago, I couldn't imagine how rich this adventure at Berklee Valencia would be, both musically and as emotionally. One great achievement of this year at Berklee is the fantastic people I met and in contact with whom I have grown both as a person as well as in my compositions. I want to thank all my friends for that, for the beautiful and talented people they are. I also want to extend my gratitude to all our teachers, who brought me out of my comfort zone and forced me to try and experiment musically. I thank them for their patience, their humility, their kindness, their talent, and their will to push us to become the best version of ourselves.

It is very important to keep in mind that this year has provided us with fantastic experiences: working with the top tools, top musicians, top engineers, top teachers, and top recording conditions. Now we have to face the real world on our own and we will have to struggle and work a lot if we want to get back to working in those conditions. But of this, I'm certain: one day, I will.