SPOTLIGHT Q & A with composition student Jake Siders and new faculty member in Scoring for Film and Multimedia Mario Godoy about his career, his compositional approach, and his Fall 2019 class MUS 22A Scoring for Film and Multimedia 1.

The class is still open for enrollment. More info at www.laspositascollege.edu/music

J.S. What's the best way to teach/learn film composition? How did you learn?

M.G. The best way to learn to compose for film is to dive in headfirst and not be afraid to take risks. There is no one "right" way to compose for film, but there are methods that are more effective than others, and it takes a lot of experimentation, trial and error, and learning on the job to find what methods work best for you.

My main compositional background is in classical music, and that gave me a great toolset to begin experimenting with composition for media. However, I quickly discovered that these skills only gave me a small portion of the necessary tools to write idiomatic music for film and video games. I spent a great deal of time after graduate school learning audio and electronic music production, and those skills have become essential parts of my compositional toolbox.

J.S. What skills should students have coming into this class and what skills can they expect to learn in the class?

M.G. Students coming into this class should have a basic knowledge of music theory principles (chords, scales, rhythms) and a desire to create. Previous compositional experience is not required, but students should be prepared to devote time to creating and honing their craft. In this program, students will learn how to use software programs such as Logic Pro X, Kontakt, and Sibelius to create scores, instrumental parts, and recordings. They will also learn basic principles of sound recording and sampling, and incorporate sound design in their projects. Students will learn about standard industry practices and techniques through assigned readings, videos, and musical discoveries. This will be a project-heavy class with lots of room for experimentation.

J.S. Will the class touch on more forms of media scoring, such as the differences between scoring films, TV series, and video games?

M.G. Definitely. The majority of my experience in music for media is actually in music for video games. Composing for film and video games have some very obvious similarities, but game music has its own unique challenges that need to be handled delicately and effectively in ways that are not present in film music. We will also be covering music for one of the fastest-growing media forms: Podcasts.

Jake Siders (J.S.) **What do you think makes film scoring such a rewarding job?**

Mario Godoy (M.G.) - Scoring for visual media is a fun, challenging, and creatively fulfilling role that allows a composer to expand beyond their own comfortable, creative palette and find new sounds and textures that help tell a story or create a world. It is a fascinating field that is continually evolving. Being a composer in this field can stressful at times, but is extremely rewarding when a project is finally released into the world.

J.S. **Do you think you approach film composition, or composition in general, differently as a saxophonist than say, a pianist or a guitarist?**

M.G. As a saxophonist, my ear tends to gravitate toward melody, theme, and interweaving lines. This has led me to approach a lot of my compositional material one line at a time and think of how individual lines interact with each other. Harmonic movement is often a byproduct of this interaction in my music. That said, I do tend to work at the piano or computer when writing rather than with the saxophone. I am not a fantastic pianist, but I am proficient enough to use the piano as a critical tool in my creative process.

J.S. **A lot can be learned from watching and listening, what film composers or specific films do you recommend students learn from by watching and listening to?**

M.G. There are so many remarkable examples of film scores that I come back to for inspiration. A couple of films that come to mind are Max Richter's score to *King Kong* from 1933 and Danny Elfman's score to *Edward Scissorhands*. But my biggest recommendation for aspiring composers is to seek out new scores and listen critically. How do these composers use their music to tell the story? What elements of their writing are effective or compelling? Is there something you would do differently? There is something that can be learned from every score.

There are so many classic textbook examples of how to compose music for film, and these are extremely important, but today's modern film composer needs a much larger swath of music to study in order to effectively create new and original work. A key component of the class will be musical discoveries where students will seek out examples of music that is

new to them and analyze what makes the piece effective. Composers need to step outside of their comfort zone, challenge their preconceptions, and find inspiration outside of the music they already like or make. By doing so, we continue to expand the foundation we have to build and shape all of our future projects.

J.S. Are you excited about the recent increase in hybrid & fully electronic scores as well as the increased focus on sound design in modern film scores?

M.G. This is a complicated question for me. As a musician, I hate to see sampled instruments replace real performers, but as a composer, I see the necessity in being able to produce high-quality work quickly and efficiently— and the reality is a lot of projects come with short time frames for turnaround and without a budget to record professional ensembles. I think it is vitally important for composers to have both a comprehensive understanding of orchestral instruments, as well as a solid grasp on electronic music production and sound design using sample libraries, synthesizers, and digital audio workstation software. My favorite scores combine a real orchestra and soloists with electronic elements that add something to the score that the orchestra alone cannot. I also really love seeing more sound design elements being incorporated into scores.

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Mario Godoy is a composer, saxophonist, sound designer, and music educator based in the San Francisco Bay Area. His compositional style has been described as "rhythmically brilliant" and "imaginatively colorful." He has written works for soloists, chamber ensembles, voice, wind ensemble, works with electronics, and music for film and video games. Groups he has worked with include Friction Quartet, Mobius Trio, The Living Earth Show, Akropolis Reed Quintet, Nomad Session, and the Del Sol String Quartet among others. He holds a Master of Music degree in composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where he studied under David Garner and Dan Becker. He also holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in Saxophone Performance from the University of Redlands where he studied saxophone with Dr. Eddie Smith and composition with Dr. Anthony Suter. He resides in the Oakland, CA where he teaches private and group lessons to musicians of all ages. He is currently the music instructor at Maybeck High School in Berkeley, CA. More info at https://www.mariogodoy.com