

Richard's Suggestions for a Successful Submission

Thanks for your interest in the workshop. It is a very special experience for emerging film and television composers and I'd like to make sure you have the best possible chance of being selected. Here are a few guidelines for you to consider:

We receive around 300 submissions each year. There are a number of people who will be reviewing your materials. Showing consideration for these people is the best way to get noticed – for the RIGHT reasons. Our volunteer judges have many other submissions to adjudicate in addition to their regular work and their personal lives.

Choose your music wisely.

Submissions go to a group of judges who are working composers. Try to envision a composer listening to your CD. He or she has at least 14 submissions to review and grade. It would be a mistake to think of this person sitting at home with a glass of wine and nothing to do but relax and enjoy your music. If you program your best writing in track 3 at about 2 minutes into that track, it may well be missed. Let the judges know that you can write, don't attempt to entertain them. This is not recreational listening for them.

The CD should be well produced with nice fades rather than abrupt cutoffs. Volume levels should remain constant from one track to the next.

A cue from a film may work brilliantly with the picture but, by itself, be a little dull. You, as the composer, may be envisioning the scene each time you hear that cue but the judge will not. Be realistic in your choices.

The ability to write like John Williams or Hans Zimmer is more of an educational exercise than a way to impress the judges. Show as much of your own writing or good dramatic skills as possible.

Don't "borrow" from well known composers. Especially film composers. Remember, film composers are judging your submission and someone is sure to recognize that piece as "sounding a lot like....."

Variety

Use primarily orchestral cues – either acoustic orchestra or emulation. However, it is best to avoid using a number of cues from the same film or project. We are not as interested in how you develop thematic material as we are in your range of genres. Show a variety of styles using the orchestra.

Presentation

Whether you are submitting to ASCAP's workshop or to a film maker or production company, make your presentation look professional. To some extent you will effect the listener before they even hear the first note. Writing your name and information on a CD with a felt tipped marker doesn't make the best impression – it makes it appear that you don't have all the equipment and facilities that a professional film composer needs.

Make sure to include all pertinent information on the CD and your paperwork. Especially your name and contact information.

Include a list of the tracks on a separate sheet (or on the CD case) so the judges can know which track they're listening to.

Give a name to each track that describes what the music is supposed to represent. For example “Action – Main Title” or “Celtic Dance”.

Include the length of each track.

Avoid one long track without IDs. (For instance an orchestral suite or concert piece)

Make printing on CD jacket or insert easy to read. Black, small text on a dark background is next to impossible.

Emulation

Workshop participants are required to write their own orchestrations. When presenting orchestral emulation on your submission CD, make sure all the parts are playable. That is, not only using the proper range of each instrument but realistic in the aspect of being humanly “playable”.

I wish you the best of luck with your application to this workshop and with your career in music.