



RCM Sparks

An Introduction To Film Music

RCM Sparks is the Royal College of Music's learning and participation programme.
To find out more and get involved visit www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks

Everyone loves watching a good movie! But sometimes we don't quite appreciate just how much music has been put into the film to make it more dramatic. For example, have you ever noticed what the music does when there is a scary moment in a film? Or if there is a sad or happy moment, what is happening with the music?

At the Royal College of Music there is a course designed to teach composers how to write music for films. They learn how to write sad, happy, scary, magical, and dramatic music – in fact all types of music!



Listen

Click on the links below and have a listen to some examples of music from famous films. In all of these examples, the music helps our minds to focus on what is going on in the story.

Jaws Theme

There's a shark in the water and it's really scary... so let's add music to make it even more scary! Notice that the main scariness comes from just 2 notes, but played dramatically.

Gladiator

In the film Gladiator when it all goes a bit wrong for Maximus, he is really sad. The music is incredibly emotional - just by using a female voice singing and some long notes on strings.

The Bare Necessities

Imagine if you are a bear and just chilling in the Jungle - life is great! The music has a light hearted feel to reflect this.

These two clips are a great way to explain clearly how the same film clip with different music can alter how we feel.

The Power of Music in a film
How Music can change a film

Still not convinced?! How about watching this next clip.

Jurassic Park without music

This is from Jurassic Park - the moment where they unveil the Dinosaur park for the first time. Here the music would add to the sense of wonder and excitement, but without any music it just feels a little bit boring. See if you agree!



Explore

1. Focussing on the clip from Jurassic Park - what words could you use to describe this moment in the film? Is it exciting? Sad? Or scary?
2. What type of music could go along with these words? Should the music be fast or slow? Loud or quiet? High or Low? Happy or sad?



Get Creative

1. Have a look around your house to find whatever instruments you can. Some of you might have a recorder or a keyboard or a guitar, but if you can, get creative too! Pots and pans from the kitchen can make fantastic drum sets, and your body can be used to make drum beats too.
2. Now start creating the music. People write music just by making decisions and starting. So if you think you want to make a dramatic drum beat for when they see the animals for the first time, pick up some sticks and start having a play around!! Or if you think there needs to be a song, have a think about some words. Try to write a short chorus for example. And start to experiment with a melody. What instruments are available for you to record along with? It could be for voice and rice in a pan even!!! Whatever sounds good!!
3. Whatever you create, it can be really fun to record it if you can! If you have an Apple device you could try making a recording using Garage Band, but there are loads of other options available – you could even record a voice memo.