

Putting It All Together: Creating Music and Sound for Film

These resources focus on the role of sound and music for eliciting emotions in film. Through careful listening and attention to detail, students are able to learn how music can tell a story by illustrating what's happening on the screen through sound.

How does film music help to create emotion for the viewers? One important factor is the choice of instruments, as each has a unique timbre, or sound. Instruments can be categorized into four groups: **strings** (violin, viola, cello, bass, harp, and piano), **woodwinds** (flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, and saxophone), **brass** (trumpet, French horn, trombone, and tuba), and **percussion** (timpani, glockenspiel, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, cymbals, triangle, tam-tam, snare drum, tenor drum, and bass drum). There are several tools available online that provide a variety of examples of the all the different musical instruments of the orchestra. Some wonderful sources include:

- The San Francisco Symphony's website for kids, which includes a variety of interactive musical games: <http://www.sfskids.org/templates/home.asp?pageid=1>
- The New York Philharmonic's educational website which also hosts a fun educational games for learning and identifying musical instruments: <http://www.nyphilkids.org/lockerroom/main.phtml?>

Several films provide wonderful examples of how music is used to the emotions of the characters in a film. The montage scene, "Married Life," in the 2009 Disney/Pixar film *Up* provides a wonderful example that prominently features the clarinet, strings, and piano. Featuring an original score by Michael Giacchino, there is no dialogue in this scene, as the music is used to perfectly illustrate the animation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILprjxFhs8s>

Another wonderful example is John Williams's score for the 1982 film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*. In contrast to Giacchino's score, Williams uses a much larger symphony orchestra. Regarded as one of the best film scores of all time, Williams's music for the film's final scenes adds emotional weight and intensity leading up to the film's most well-known scene in which Elliot and E.T. fly over the moon. Right before Elliot and E.T. lift-off at 0.31 in the clip, the chimes come in, which adds intensity to the build-up before the film's primary theme comes in at 0.36:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTVoFCP1BLg>