

FROM THE **AUTHOR** OF **COMPOSING FOR FILM & LYRICS, LYRICS, LYRICS**

50

GREAT

CLASSICAL

FILM AND

TELEVISION

THEMES

AND **WHY** THEY WORKED



BY

JACK SMALLEY

50 great classical, film and television

THEMES

... AND WHY THEY WORKED

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SAMPLE PAGES

Adams Family
Appalachian Spring
Atonement
Baby Elehant walk
Batman
Baywatch
bonanza
Bond Theme
Bourne Identity
Charade
Charlies Angels
Cinderella
Dallas
Daphne and Chloe
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Dragnet Theme
E.T.
Escales
Fifth Symphony
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Harry Potter
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I Spy
Jaws
Knightrider
La Mer (The Sea)
Laura

Maria
Mayberry Theme
Mission Impossible
Mother Goose Suite
Nadia's Theme
Perry Mason
Peter and the Wolf
Peter Gunn
Pictures at an Exhibition
Pink Panther
Raiders of the Lost Ark
Rite of Spring
Rocky's Theme
Star Trek
Star Wars
Tara's Theme
The Tonight Show
Tristan and Isolde
Twilight Zone
World of Color
X men
Zorba the Greek

SAMPLE PAGES

ADAMS FAMILY

VIC MIZZY



The Adams Family was a black and white television series that ran from 1964 through 1966 and featured a bizarre, macabre family based on single panel cartoons drawn by Charles Adams for the New Yorker magazine. Adams meant the cartoons to be a satirical version of the average American family. He succeeded almost too well as we recognized ourselves in the cartoons as well as the television series.

Mizzy's theme pays homage to the classic melodic description of tonality as triplets playing the scale from 5 to 1. The triplets gave it kind of a soft shoe comedic quality answered with hand claps or finger snaps on beat two and three of the second measure. A little gimmicky, but what the hey.

The move to the C chord by restating the triplets to measure three is a great move as it avoids introducing a diatonic V chord (G7) containing a tritone interval that demands resolution. The little tune is complete within itself and doesn't need a cadence right in the middle. Also welcome is the repeat of the hand claps as a sort of restatement of a theme.

Actually this little four measure statement is an introduction to a song describing the Adams family. In all honesty though, this jaunty little intro does the job well. We know what the series will be about!

SAMPLE PAGES

BAYWATCH

D'Andrea/Lewis



Baywatch is one of those shows like Charlie's Angels - women watch to see what they're wearing, men watch to see what they're not wearing. In the case of Baywatch, it's bathing suits and that's about all.

But that's the reason the show was such a hit. After struggling to get on the air, it finally ran from 1999 to 2001. The star was David Hasselhoff, but, let's face it, the real stars were the girls in bathing suits.

The opening chord was a "power" chord, then a drum fill, later a piano fill (notated here) a little more drum fill, then a theme song by Chris Lennertz. That was enough, as we were already privileged to see the girls.

The score to the series was basically a relatively sophisticated rock and roll feel, done synthetically by John D'Andrea and Corey Lewis. It was realized and recorded pretty much in their own studio.

By the way, it might be worthwhile to mention here that many big recording studios have been shut down for lack of business. They've been replaced by synth studios all over the world.

Take heed.

SAMPLE PAGES

DOWNTON ABBY

John Lunn

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a grand piano score in 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 120. It features a melody in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The bottom staff is labeled 'strings' and starts at measure 4. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand, mirroring the piano part.

Downton Abby was a very popular Masterpiece Theater offering, detailing the lives of British family around the time of the first World War. As it was a period piece we could forgive the non-contemporary setting for the story.

The main title theme composed by Scottish composer John Lunn captures the lush, expensive long forgotten life style of a posh British family.

The piano is fully realized as carrying the melody and the accompanying ostinato, which simply outlines the simplistic two chord harmonization of the piece. The performance is enhanced by a full string section that leans on the ostinato and makes a melodic statement at the end of each four bars.

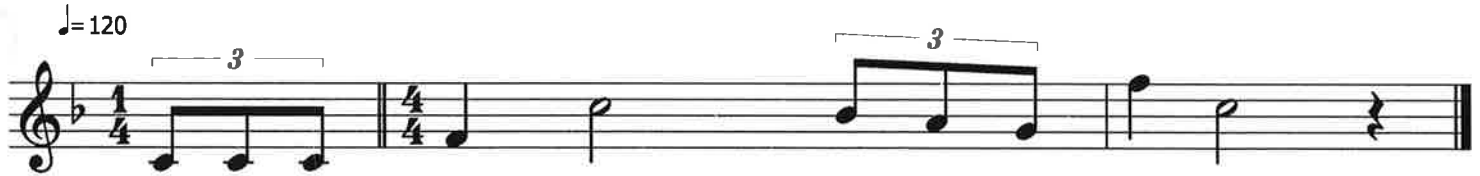
The effect is galvanizing. It sounds like *something* is happening! There is actually little point in trying to “sing” the melody as it’s basically there as an adjunct to the exciting ostinato.

This is an important style as it’s the formula for a “non-thematic” main title that gets the program going. As such it works just fine, thank you. Of interest is the extended harmony - the added ninth - outlined by the string answers every four bars.

SAMPLE PAGES

STAR WARS

JOHN WILLIAMS



STAR WARS

The theme for Star Wars is John Williams signature film score. Owing to the film's popularity this theme is indelibly burned into our brains. Go anyplace practically in the universe everyone recognizes this theme!

The first triplet is John's nod to the militaristic feel of the film. This introductory statement, the pick up, is on the 5th of key defining the tonality. (The fifth of a tonality is as strong as the key note and is frequently a pick up.)

The first two notes of measure 2 define the prime shape: there is strength here. In fact any combination of 1 to 1, 1 to 5, 5 to 1, etc is a leap that sets the tone.

A bit of warmth at the end of this measure is provided by the descending scale as a triplet. There will be moments of softness in the story.

The two notes of the last measure is basically 1 to 5 signaling the end of the theme. Short and sweet. This theme is a complete description, besides the title, of the film. We know what to expect.

Note: You may have heard the resemblance to a theme by Erich Korngold from King's Row, a 1942 film starring Ronald Reagen. There's a strong possibility the score was used as a temp track, influencing musical directions.

SAMPLE PAGES