

Berklee College of Music
Valencia Campus

DESERT SONG

a storyteller's quest

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Music in Scoring for
Film, Television, and Video Games

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a reflection on the process of completing the culminating experience project for Berklee College of Music's Scoring for Film, Television, and Video Games Master's program. The reflection first examines the author's musical and cultural background and his process in deciding the project's focus. It then provides a detailed musical and narrative analysis of the composition and how it relates to its subject matter. Topics such as thematic development, harmonic development, orchestration, music production, music mixing, and music preparation are covered. The paper concludes with a reflection on the project as a whole.

Keywords: Music, Composition, Orchestration, Production, Indian, Folk, Rajasthan, Desert

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Confluence

Like many, my relationship with music is a long and complex one, undeniably shaped by my cultural experiences. My parents emigrated to the United States from India in the late 1980s, before I was born. I grew up speaking three languages, enjoying Indian food at home, and watching Hindi films and TV programs. The second-generation immigrant experience is often discussed, commonly through the lens of discrimination, alienation, and a mismatch of cultural identity. I also faced such experiences, growing up in a predominantly white, American neighborhood, attending predominantly white, American schools; but I also believe the greatest gift I received from my family was Indian culture. I was fortunate enough to begin studying Indian classical (*Hindustani*¹) vocal music at an early age as well as study *tabla*² for a number of years. I continue to study Indian classical vocal music to this day, and hold a deep admiration for Indian music at large.

In the same vein, however, I consider my Americanness as essential to my identity as a musician and person as my Indianness. While I was not memorizing *paltas*³ or *kaidas*⁴, I was relentlessly practicing Joplin or Debussy on piano, and Bach etudes on violin. My early experiments with improvisation led to my first piano compositions at the age of 11 and 12, and my experiences in school orchestras illustrated to me the worlds of harmony and orchestration. My study of piano and violin - and even more so, my casual experimentation with improvisation - revealed to me much about how music and harmony worked on a subconscious level; so much so that my initial formal study of music theory became more of an exercise in confirmation rather than discovery. Classical music traditions, both Western and Indian, instilled a discipline, rigor and deep respect for music. They opened my mind and ears to how music worked, and revealed to me that I could possibly tell stories through the music I created.

¹ North Indian classical music.

² Hand drums originating from the Indian subcontinent.

³ Melodic patterns (literally, “turns”) utilized for practice in Indian music.

⁴ Compositions or variations designed for Indian percussion instruments.

As much as Khusrow⁵ and Ravel have had a hand in shaping my musical brain however, so have Radiohead and Kanye West. I draw a lot of inspiration from musical acts across genres and continents. Growing up near Atlanta, hip-hop was a mainstay on radio stations and is one of my biggest musical influences. Alternative and art rock introduced me to guitar and songwriting, shaping my compositional style as much as piano or violin. My first experience in recording music on a DAW⁶ came not from recording piano compositions, but making beats for rap songs with friends. Music from around the world, especially folk music, continuously fascinates me, from the Sahara to Baluchistan, from Celtic to Bengali. It is my belief that having an open mind is an essential quality for a creative person. Just as the best favor a writer can do to him or herself is read, the best favor a musician can do themselves is listen to music. I try exposing myself to as much music as possible. So long as it feels authentic and honest, regardless of genre, style, culture, or time, music is sure to leave an indelible mark somewhere in my subconscious.

So why scoring for visual media? I found out at a young age that music had a storytelling power. Even without words, it was apparent to me that music had the power to evoke emotions, colors, and images in my brain. It seemed like a magical force, that if I could somehow harness, I could at least keep myself satisfied for a very long time. Scoring for visual media seemed to me a natural direction of this process. Because of its implicit power, music can add to a story what no other media can. And because it is usually implicit and subconscious, we composers have the ability to simply suggest, but not explain. The music I like best is one that simply suggests, but does not ask me to feel a certain way. In turn, my relationship with the music feels more personal; it requires me to engage in conversation with the music in order for it to complete its task. And so, without knowing it, my experience becomes intertwined with that of the composer's.

⁵ 13th century Indian poet, scholar, and musician; central figure in the development of Indian classical music.

⁶ Digital Audio Workstation

Searching for a Story

And this brings me to my culminating experience. Given the parameters of the project - a full three-minute cue recorded by some of the best recording musicians on the planet - deciding a direction was no simple task for me. However, there were a few things I felt certain about. I wanted my music to be unique, and to stand on its own merit. I wanted my piece to somehow synthesize my various musical influences and variations. And I wanted to somehow pay homage to my cultural heritage, one that had fundamentally shaped my worldview and artistry. Though I felt strongly about these constraints, they didn't guide me as clearly as I would have hoped. I wasn't able to point myself decidedly in a direction regarding what type of media to score. I didn't know where to start researching films or shorts, or musical ideas. As a result, and coupled with my own indecision, I did not start seriously researching ideas for my project until later in the semester. I have a tendency to procrastinate (as many of us composers do), but once I finally began thinking seriously about my project, I found myself lost and stressed.

It would be remiss to not acknowledge the global situation this project was taking place in. As will undoubtedly be remembered for years to come, 2020 saw the COVID-19 pandemic bring life to a standstill, and fundamentally change our generation's experience, not to mention our year at Berklee. I made the decision to leave Spain as the country was entering its lockdown, hoping to at least spend time with family back in the United States while Spain's lockdown ran its course. Plans were made to return to campus after the virus had subsided, but as we know now, our days on campus had ended. The spring and summer semesters resumed with online classes, and Berklee's faculty and staff made an incredible effort in retooling the curriculum for an online experience. Still, I wonder how our experiences would have been different if not for the pandemic, and how my project may have evolved differently.

Regardless of the extraordinary situation, I started my creative process in the same way I typically do. I decided that scoring an existing piece of visual media would not satisfy the criteria I had set for myself, so I instead chose to lead with the music first. Perhaps it was not

the most in line with what the Masters program was intended for, but I felt confident that I had had plenty of experience scoring for visual media through other projects, and that my best work came from when I was invested in my music fully. The concept that eventually became my project came to me first; a melody based on a groove in 11/8; a dramatic and action-packed story, incorporating fantasy and folklore; and the incorporation of Hindustani classical melody by way of my own vocals. Since this was an entirely musical concept though, I attempted two separate ideas based on more concrete narrative material.

My first idea came to me after a late night of mining my own memories. A memory of myself walking on the streets of Montolivet⁷ flashed into my mind, accompanied by a steady, rhythmic, clock-like pulse. I heard a simple melody, that to me, captured the experience of living in Valencia. It was not a yearning to go back, or a lament of experiences lost; it was simply a contentment in reliving my time there. I saw myself leaving my apartment and making my six-minute walk to Berklee's campus; I saw my feet tracking the inner streets behind my apartment to the ever-frequented *Maestro* for a kebab. I saw the water outside of Berklee's front door reflecting the sky as I sat there, having only just finished a night's work at 2:15 in the morning, accompanied by classmates and friends. This, somehow, presented itself to me as a complete idea. I had a hunch in the back of my mind that this likely did not satisfy my initial criteria; but it was an idea at a time I desperately needed one, and so I opened my DAW⁸ and wrote my first sketch.

After this idea, I decided I needed to attempt something more concretely based on a story as well. My original 11/8 musical concept danced around in my brain, but I felt confident enough in it that I didn't need to sketch it out. I was staying with my partner at the time, who thankfully had a copy of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, a novel that I had loved reading many years ago. The climax scene of this story felt fitting for a 3-minute cue, and so I began my sketching process. Though *The Alchemist* is not set anywhere near the Indian subcontinent, its elements shared quite a bit with Indian folklore and spirituality. I felt that incorporating elements of Indian folk would work well. I wrote a full orchestral sketch, more complete than

⁷ Neighborhood in Valencia, near Berklee College of Music campus.

⁸ Digital Audio Workstation

my previous one, and felt satisfied. I had at least begun the process, and had some solid musical material to choose a direction from.

I presented these two ideas to my CE advisor, Sergio, and the most telling feedback I received was that he preferred my more minimal, melodically simpler sketch because it sounded more unique and had more potential for expansion, whereas my more complete sketch based on *The Alchemist* felt more “stereotypical”. I was not very attached to either sketch emotionally, but I found this feedback very interesting and telling. This reaffirmed to me that finding a musical direction that was unique and honest was the correct approach. Though I did not proceed with either of these sketches, I am very glad I started from this point. It allowed me to flex my compositional muscles a bit, and get a better sense of what would work. Somewhere in my mind, I knew that my original musical idea was my best shot, and so I got to work.

Simultaneously, I was bouncing ideas for story material off of my friends and family, as well as my partner. We both share a passion and interest in Indian classical art, music, and dance, as well as Indian traditions and folklore. Deciding that Indian folklore would be an interesting avenue to pursue, she suggested I research a folk story called *Dhola-Maru*. This tale hails from the northwest Indian state of Rajasthan, a region rich in folk traditions. *Dhola-Maru* tells the tale of Dhola, a prince, separated from Maru, a princess and his beloved. Maru sends an envoy to Dhola, relaying her message that she still loves him, and Dhola sets off across the desert to reunite with his beloved. The two face various obstacles and are almost captured by a band of dacoits, but narrowly escape due to Maru’s quick thinking and return to their kingdom. This story caught my attention for several reasons. For one, music is a prominent element in both the story and the storytelling itself. Maru makes several attempts to contact her beloved Dhola, but it is only a singing bard that succeeds in conveying her message. Dhola is also accompanied by this bard on his journey. One of the trials that the couple face involves Dhola being bitten by a snake and nearly dying, only to be saved by the bard and the power of his song, so it is said. And given that this is a form of folk poetry, it is traditionally told through song, dance, and puppetry. Secondly, the most popular folk tales from Indian folklore tend to be tragedies, involving unrequited love and death. This story was one of few I researched that ended victoriously; I felt that my musical ideas would better suit this narrative direction. And

finally, I did appreciate the characterization of Maru as a nuanced character with agency, contrary to many female characters often found in folklore in India and around the world. Her actions propel the narrative as much as Dhola's, and the two make it home safely due to her efforts. Though I had decided on a theme and musical direction before researching this story, I felt I could make my musical idea work given this narrative.

After a couple rounds of sketching, writing, rewriting, and researching, I felt I had finally found the right direction and story for my project.

COMPOSITION

A Groove and a Melody

As mentioned previously, I decided on a few elements of my composition before finalizing my narrative direction. These were an 11/8 groove and a primary theme. The groove in 11/8 is felt in groupings of 3, 3, 3, and 2 eighth notes. Furthermore, I divide the first three groupings of 3 eighth notes into 2 dotted eighth notes. This gives the groove a total of 8 counts, with six dotted eighth notes and two eighth notes.

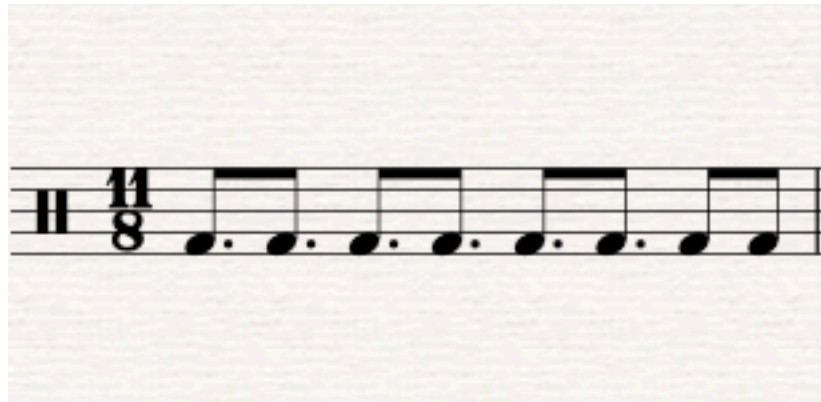


Fig 1. Groove in 11/8

This pattern stuck with me over several weeks. I have a fascination with making grooves out of irregular rhythmic patterns, and this rhythmic idea allowed me to craft a melody that felt natural yet irregular. Because the note values of an eighth and dotted eighth are close, one may perceive the rhythm as almost speeding up in the last two counts of the measure. However, since the subdivisions are relatively constant, it allows for a clearly defined melody.

Interestingly, I had also had a history with this rhythmic pattern; one of the first tunes I wrote on guitar was in this time signature, using a division of 3+3+3+2. It's also not unheard of; songs by artists like Radiohead and Rodrigo y Gabriela come to mind when I think of this rhythm.

However, it did feel unique in film and orchestral music, and gave me a chance to craft something noteworthy and personal.

After spending some time with this groove, I developed a melody. Though I had not finalized my narrative, I intended for the melody to be heroic and expressive. Modally and harmonically, creating a melody and basic harmony in Dorian mode⁹ made the most sense to me. It's very commonly utilized in film music for its flexibility, especially in fantasy and adventure. It's also a common mode in Indian classical and folk music. Plus, I also happen to have quite a soft spot for Dorian mode; many of my early compositions were in Dorian mode, before I even understood what a mode was. However, even though I have a long history of composing in Dorian mode, I felt that this was a time, if any, to play to my strengths.



Fig 2. Primary Theme

The melody is composed of two distinct lines or melodic cells, the first spanning two measures and the second a measure long. Though the composition of these cells was mostly intuitive, the reduction of a two-measure phrase to a one measure phrase gives the melody direction and gravity. The first cell is characterized by wide leaps like fourths and fifths, while the second cell consists of descending stepwise motion. The first cell produces movement from the tonic to the fourth scale degree, while the second cell prominently features the flat third melodically and harmonically. As a result, the first cell feels to me more heroic and forward-looking, while the second complements it with a more emotional and conclusive arc. Rhythmically, the melody follows the groove of dotted eighth notes followed by regular eighth notes.

⁹ Musical mode, or scale, in Western classical music

Scoring the Narrative

As the melody and basic groove were taking shape, so was my conception of the narrative. After dwelling on the story I had researched, I began developing a broad structure for the composition. The final structure of the composition tracks these narrative points (for the full screenplay treatment, see Appendix A).

1. Dhola receives an envoy from Maru, in the form of a traveling bard, singing in his court.
2. Dhola sets out across the desert to Maru's kingdom, along with the bard and his wife.
3. Dhola and Maru are reunited and begin their journey back to Dhola's kingdom.
4. Dhola and Maru are captured by a band of dacoits on their way back.
5. Dhola becomes intoxicated, but Maru, on the advice of the bard's wife is able to formulate a quick escape.
6. The two heroes ride home, safe and victorious.

I chose the opening scene of the bard singing in Dhola's court as the starting point for my narrative because it gave me an opportunity to incorporate Indian classical vocal music in my composition. I recorded myself singing two couplets in a tune I had composed in an Indian classical style. However, I did not want to explicitly sing something that the bard would have sung, or in other words, mickey-mouse the storytelling, in a way. I believe strongly in music's implicit narrative power, as I discussed before, and I wanted to illustrate the mood through the vocals, and particularly Dhola's emotional state as he realizes what the bard is communicating to him. Therefore, I chose the following text to sing:

Aisi Aag Lage Jo Sau Sawan Baras Gaye

Baras Gaye Par Bujhi Na Man Ki Pyaas

Kaga Sab Tan Khaiyo Mora Chun Chun Khaiyo Maas

Do Naina Mat Khaiyo Mohe Piya Milan Ki Aas

Which can be roughly translated to:

*Such a fire burned that it rained for a hundred years
It rained, but still, the thirst of my heart was not quenched*

*O crow, you may eat my whole body, but choose what flesh you eat
Do not eat my two eyes, so that I may see my beloved once more*

The first couplet is written by 20th century Indian lyricist Bharat Vyas, while the second is a famous couplet written by 12th century Punjabi mystic and poet Fariduddin Ganjshakar, also known reverentially as Baba Sheikh Farid. The two couplets actually appear together in Bharat Vyas's poetry, in which he is also quoting the latter. The second couplet is often quoted in literature, song, and film, and is an example of *Sufi* poetry. *Sufism* is a form of Islamic mysticism with a long history of influence on culture and art in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. This couplet is also one that has personally stuck with me over many years, and I believe it captures the transcendental nature of the narrative.

Compositionally, the solo vocal line is accompanied by piano chords and growing legato orchestral texture, set to a medium slow 80 beats per minute. The vocal line is very *rubato*¹⁰ and the orchestral texture grows slowly, so the whole note piano chords offer the only real source of pulse. The harmonic progression is constant and straightforward with the chords C (without the third), Eb, Bb, and F cycling every four bars. Each four bars matches one line of the vocals. The texture begins with only violins and violas, *sul tasto*¹¹. As the texture builds, more elements are slowly introduced. In the second half, woodwinds enter with more rhythmic phrases. The flutes and the oboes trade off phrases based on the primary theme that is yet to be revealed, offering a taste of what's ahead. The texture builds, incorporating the full orchestra, towards a grand climax as the last line concludes, and immediately the 11/8 groove begins, led by percussion and low strings.

¹⁰ Leisurely, free from time; musical direction.

¹¹ Instruction to string players to bow over the fingerboard.

The 11/8 groove marks the beginning of the next section of the narrative. The short, powerful bursts from the low strings and percussion and tambourine rhythm accompany Dhola riding out into the desert. The calls from the brass represent the bard riding along with him, singing out as they ride away. After the brass calls fade away, we have the first introduction of the primary melody on solo flute. Clarinets provide harmonic backing and solo bassoon answers the melody with countermelodies. This shift to the woodwinds accompanies a scene change to Maru, waiting in her castle for her envoy to return. She is nervous, yet hopeful, confident that her envoy must have reached her beloved.

After this initial presentation of the main theme, it is repeated with a larger orchestral texture. Three horns, second violins, and violas play the melody in unison, accompanied by oboes after the first two bars. Flutes provide harmony in the high register while cellos and basses secure the lower register. In the second half of the theme, first violins, clarinets and tuba enter, growing the harmony, and trombones enter on the last bar, propelling the composition into the next section. In this section, we have returned to Dhola and the bard, now nearing Maru's kingdom. Maru sees them approaching, the two are overjoyed in their reunion, and they set off to return to Dhola's kingdom.

The next section is the first departure from the primary melodic and harmonic material. This section involves quickly alternating time signatures, and staccato running melody carried by the trumpets, punctuated by short stabs from strings and low brass. Clarinets and oboes double the trumpet melody at various points. The full phrase repeats twice. In the second iteration, the tambourine returns and the horns play sustained chords, so the texture becomes less staccato. The section builds towards an intense climax which reaches the key of F#, a departure from the previous key of C. The action-oriented nature of this section accompanies the protagonists facing the set of dangers during their ride home. They must fend off snakes, demons, and other creatures. Initially, they seem to be successful; however, they are eventually captured and held hostage, as indicated by the music growing more intense and darker, finally culminating in a new key and a new, more ominous modality.

Dhola, Maru, the bard and his wife are now captives of the band of dacoits. Accordingly, the texture in this section is dark, ominous and eerie. The danger they face is represented by

short, legato phrases played by the trombones and celli. Dissonant harmonics in the high strings, low *flautando*¹² from the bass clarinet, and low breathy trills from the second flute add to ominous ambience. Bassoon and solo horn play modified echoes of the primary theme, conveying that the heroes are in danger, and particularly that Dhola is being intoxicated and losing his senses. However, the texture soon changes. Solo flute emerges over a more consonant harmony as the texture begins to build with viola trills and a second violin ostinato. The bard's wife has conveyed to Maru that Dhola is being intoxicated, and so she prepares herself to make an escape. Orchestration builds more with low brass and strings as Maru climbs the camel they had been riding on. And finally, in a swift move, she grabs Dhola and they narrowly escape, as a quick staccato passage from woodwinds and strings bring the composition back to the original key of C and original modality. The staccato passage consists of a bar of 2/4 and 5/16, resulting in four, four, and five sixteenth notes. I found this rhythmic device effective in capturing the quickness of the escape and building rhythmic tension that resolves as the primary theme returns.

Victorious and safe, the heroes now complete their journey home. The main theme returns, asserting itself boldly in via trumpets and clarinets, with countermelodies in the horns and trombones. Sixteenth note runs in the flutes and oboes highlight the excitement and constant sixteenth note passages in the violas continue to provide energy. First violins harmonize the melody in the second half of this section, again building the texture, finally towards a climax. The last four bars see the reintroduction of the vocals, symbolizing the return of the heroes and the bard singing their story. Brass, oboes, clarinets, and second violins play this final melody in octaves, garlanded by sixteenth-note runs in the flutes and staccato sixteenth note passages in the violas. This concluding phrase also features the original harmonic sequence from the first section of the composition, racing towards a triumphant conclusion.

¹² Flutter-tongue articulation

MUSIC PRODUCTION

Traditionally, the SFTV Culminating Experience piece is recorded in AIR Studios, London, mixed, mastered, and then submitted. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic however, recording in London was not feasible before the completion of our Masters. While the class does intend to record in AIR Studios when possible, the submission of this project was accordingly a highly produced mockup, rather than a studio mix. As such, particular attention was given to producing and mixing the mockup in order to provide the highest quality product possible given the circumstances.

A Massive Mockup

For my mockup, I used a combination of the Spitfire BBC Symphonic Orchestra and Cinematic Studio Solo Strings libraries¹³, plus the Grandeur Piano library from Native Instruments. Spitfire's BBC library had been my primary orchestral library for a couple months. Before my year at Berklee, I was not too familiar with high quality orchestral libraries; I primarily used Session Strings¹⁴ and Kontakt Factory Library¹⁵ instruments from Native Instruments. I was not aware of how MIDI¹⁶ parameters like CC1¹⁷ and CC11 could affect dynamics. However, armed with a year's worth of sequencing knowledge and practice, I was confident I could make the most of my new libraries.

My composition process began in the sequencer, so my mockup was built as my composition was taking shape. I used a piano to formulate harmony after which I did my initial orchestration within the sequencer. I was fortunate enough to use a friend's orchestral template, which made my sequencing process quite fluid.

¹³ Libraries of virtual instruments used to emulate orchestral instruments.

¹⁴ Sample library developed by Native Instruments, a music software company.

¹⁵ Sample library developed by Native Instruments, a music software company.

¹⁶ Musical Instrument Digital Interface; protocol for communication between musical hardware and software

¹⁷ Continuous Control; refers to a type of MIDI message



Fig. 3 Screenshot of Logic X¹⁸ Sequencing Session

Therefore, through my composition process, I completed a bulk of the sequencing work. I made it a habit to sketch in basic modulation curves as I was composing to relay the dynamic intention as much as I could. However, even as I completed my sketches, my mockup was still quite rough. I had already begun working on my score, and so I both refined my mockup and completed my orchestration in tandem. This proved to be a helpful process, as I forced myself to remain in a certain section until both the orchestration and mockup refinement were completed. Through my entire composition and orchestration process however, I only used the Spitfire BBC library. This was my primary library for orchestral composition, as the Cinematic Studio Solo Strings library was only used for layering strings samples to create a richer, more realistic sound. Additionally, I opted to use the pre-mixed mic signal in both libraries, as they provided a natural, cohesive sound out of the box. I experimented with blending close signals, but this did not greatly affect the quality of my mockup, and it further increased memory strain on my sequencing laptop, for which reason, I did not pursue it. So, after my composition and

¹⁸ DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) developed by Apple, Inc.

mockup were finalized with the Spitfire BBC library, I layered the strings with the Cinematic Studio Solo Strings Library. These libraries work similarly in terms of CC messages, so layering was a simple process of copy, paste, and double check.

Mixing

The mixing process for this project was also fairly unique. Mockups I had mixed before were typically smaller ensembles or hybrid cues, and fully orchestral mixes were typically mixed from live recordings. Since my composition was primarily orchestral, other than a single vocal stem, my mixing process was fairly straightforward. A benefit of using a few libraries was that samples already sounded cohesive and in the same sonic space. Using the mixed mic signal samples from both the Spitfire BBC library, I was able to produce a well-balanced mix without major effort.



Fig. 4 Screenshot of Logic X mixer window

I first exported stems from my sequencing session and created a new project in order to avoid dealing with MIDI instruments occupying computer memory. I sub-mixed these stems according to their instrument family and applied some light compression on each sub-mix. For

certain sections or certain stems, I did apply some special processing; for example, the initial presentation of the theme, played by solo flute, was brought to a higher volume using clip gain. I then used a compressor on the flute stem to smooth out the signal. After sub-mixing and compressing, I applied a small amount of reverb to the mix. As I was dealing with room mic signal samples, I did not have much need to recreate a space; nevertheless, a small amount of reverb did help provide cohesiveness to the mockup overall. I used a hall reverb for all instruments, a long plate reverb for long articulations, and a short plate reverb for short articulations. All three of the reverbs used were from Altiverb¹⁹. Additionally, I applied some processing on the final mix bus, including compression and light EQ. I referenced Tonal Balance Control²⁰ to root out any resonating frequencies. The resultant mix sounded close to the original mockup, but a little more present and more cohesive.

Score & Music Preparation

All music preparation was done using Sibelius²¹. I had imported my rough mockup into Sibelius via MIDI exported from my sequencer, and therefore was able to reference my rough score as I finalized my orchestration and my mockup. Composing and orchestrating in this hybrid manner, with both score and sequencer present, proved to be an extremely useful process, allowing me to orchestrate in detail and immediately hear the result in the sequencer. After I had completed my mockup, I finalized my score by hand. I chose not to import any new MIDI in order to avoid any clashes with my existing formatted score. Editing the score by hand was more tedious and time-consuming than expected - I had not yet imported any percussion, so all percussion parts and stems were notated by hand. However, this process did allow me to inspect the score in detail and proofread. After my score was finalized, I formatted my parts individually. This process was also tedious but straightforward, as each part needed to be specifically treated. The music preparation was an interesting exercise because I was not immediately recording this composition. I found myself a little more relaxed than in previous

¹⁹ Reverb Plug-In (software) developed by Audio Ease, Inc.

²⁰ Plug-In (software) developed by Izotope, Inc.

²¹ Music notation software developed by Avid, Inc.

projects, perhaps comforted by the knowledge that there was still time to fix mistakes. Nevertheless, for my own sake and the sake of the project, I did my best to proofread the score and parts for my submission.

RETROSPECTIVE

True to its name, this project was the culmination of several skills and ideas I had learned and imbibed in my time at Berklee. Concrete skills such as mockup production, mixing, and music preparation of course came into play, as well more intuitive skills of composition, harmonization, orchestration, and narrative scoring. I was pleasantly surprised with my efficiency, compared to my first few projects of the year. In terms of scoring and composition, this process was fascinating in its uniqueness. I made the decision to eschew traditional scene scoring for a more conceptual, music-focused idea. Was this against the spirit of the project? I did certainly have my hesitations. However, at its completion, I believe the route I took made the most sense for myself and my project. I am endlessly fascinated by music's implicit storytelling power, both in the context of visual media and without. Though this composition is still ultimately narrative, it represents an effort of mine to capture a mood and essence of a story. I feel confident that this composition represents my confluence of musical influences and ideas. I've struggled with finding a unique compositional voice through the years, and this project has given me an opportunity to do so. It allowed me to not only tell a story, but tell my own story.

APPENDIX A: SCREENPLAY TREATMENT

INT. PALACE COURT

The royal court is gathered. DHOLA, the prince, is present. A BARD has entered the court and demanded an audience with him.

[0:00 - MX IN] The BARD begins to sing.

The BARD's song moves DHOLA. His words relay the message of a long-lost love, MARU. DHOLA sees flashes of his memories with MARU.

[0:50] CUT to EXT. DESERT

DHOLA and BARD ride away on DHOLA'S camel, into the desert. [0:54] The BARD sings a song of joy.

[1:03] CUT to INT. PALACE OVERLOOK

MARU paces expectantly, looking out over the desert in front of her castle. Hopeful yet nervous, she hopes that her envoy has reached DHOLA.

As she is pacing, she sees a rider off in the distance.

[1:26] CUT to EXT. DESERT

DHOLA and the BARD ride towards MARU's castle. [1:47] DHOLA and MARU reunite and begin their journey home.

[1:50] CUT to EXT. DESERT

We see a montage of trials faced by DHOLA and MARU. DHOLA is attacked by snakes, but is able to fight them off. [1:58] With regained confidence, we see DHOLA and MARU fight off demons and creatures.

[2:04] However, they are soon surrounded by a band of DACOITS, who capture them.

[2:06] CUT to EXT. DESERT CAMP - NIGHT

DHOLA, MARU, and the BARD are captured by the band. DHOLA is steadily becoming more intoxicated. MARU and the BARD are fearful.

[2:16] MARU sees an opportunity. She sneaks away as the dacoits corner DHOLA. She finds the camel they had ridden on and mounts it along with the BARD.

[2:23] She races towards DHOLA, and swiftly grabs him before the dacoits can do anything. The three nimbly escape.

[2:27] CUT to EXT. DESERT - MORNING

MARU is steering the camel as DHOLA awakes. Realizing they have escaped he is ecstatic. DHOLA's kingdom is in sight.

[2:48] The BARD calls out in song as the three near the kingdom. Magically, wings emerge from the camel, and it soars into the air. The voice of the BARD echoes over the desert as DHOLA, MARU, the BARD and the camel fade away into the rising sun [3:00 - MX OUT].