



*to sing along to Chitty Chitty Bang Bang as a little kid, so I guess that must have initiated my interest in film music. But probably the main event, which triggered my desire to become a film composer, was the movie Krull. (I'm glad, by the way, that La-La Land Records is re-releasing the album. I think it's a must-have for any serious soundtrack fan.) I remember leaving the movie theater with my parents, humming James Horner's main theme for that movie. It was simply magical. Shortly thereafter, I joined the Vienna Choir Boys, so I got 5 years of wonderful exposure to an amazing repertoire of Classical music. After that, I took some theory and orchestration classes at UCLA Extension, as part of their Certificate Program in Film Music. I also got their Certificate in Screen Writing, by the way, which was a bit intimidating, at least initially, since I think I was the only non-native English speaker in the entire program at the time.*

**Do you have any fun anecdotes you could share about your days touring with the Vienna Choir Boys?**

*I remember that all aspects of touring were very serious. The Vienna Choir Boys have always been the unofficial ambassadors of Austria. We attended many formal dinners with heads of state, celebrities, etc., so our manners always had to be at their best. So, 99% of the time, we had to be super-serious and ultra-well behaved. You know when something funny happens in a serious situation, and everybody starts giggling uncontrollably? Well, that happened during a concert on tour. During a dialog section of the play, which was always the middle part of our concerts, I think one of us mispronounced a word, thereby changing its meaning to something utterly ridiculous. We were laughing and giggling for what was probably only a few minutes but what felt like hours. Even the audience was in stitches. We found out only afterwards that our headmaster was sitting in the audience, very displeased! I bet he was the only one not laughing! He normally stayed in Vienna and only occasionally made surprise*

*visits during tours. Well, he couldn't have picked a worse day!*

**When did you first notice film music as a career option for yourself?**

*After the Vienna Choir Boys and high school, I really wanted to become a film composer but my parents urged me to study something that would result in "secure" income. I have since learned that nothing in life is truly secure but at the time, I followed their advice, against my instincts, and studied law and psychology at University of Vienna. I also studied Japanology and theater. When I commit to something, I usually give it my all. So, I had very good grades but I felt completely empty inside, and depressed. Fortunately, my parents picked up on that and enabled me to study film scoring in L.A., and I've never looked back.*



**Did you ever get to work on film music in Austria?**

*I tried to find work in Austria, contacting directors and sending them demos. The reaction was always that my music sounded "too Hollywood". However, I joined an organization called Magellan-Film. Their whole idea was that members would pay an annual fee which would then fund various short film projects. I think they had about 120 members at the time. Any member could apply for funding by pitching an idea to the board. I wrote, directed, and scored 4 short films with them, some of which won several awards at indie film festivals in Austria and Germany. Some very dedicated people were involved with Magellan-Film, and it's a shame that that organization doesn't exist anymore, but I'm sure that similar organizations have since stepped into their place.*

**After graduating from UCLA, you got to work with Paul Haslinger on several of his**

**scores. How did you meet Paul and what were your duties on his works?**

*I had met Paul at a film music symposium in Vienna in 1995, and later emailed him occasionally, eventually letting him know about my score for the short film, Wrong Hollywood Number. Paul really liked what I did and asked me to work with him. Paul is one of the very best in the industry, regarding electronic music, rhythm programming, sample manipulation, etc. Since my background was in Classical music, I had a lot of catching up to do, but I really enjoyed the process. I learned so much from Paul, not only about music but also about the realities of movie industry life, the logistics, and the politics. I also learned that, no matter how stressful or bizarre the circumstances, I can always find immense joy in making music, in a way where the circumstances don't seem to matter that much, especially in retrospect. When I started working with Paul, he was busy with Into The Blue, on which I did arranging, programming, and some orchestration. At the same time, I was handling a lot of the work on the fifth season of the NBC series, Fear Factor, on which I eventually got an "Additional Music by" credit for season 6. More recently, I have worked with composer John Ottman, doing some programming on The Losers, and several arrangements on The Resident, which I think will be released in August. John has been very kind, and I believe that there is genuine respect for each other's work. His feedback and insight have been tremendously helpful.*

**Your choral/orchestral piece Consolatio for the University of Ottawa was a big springboard for you. How did you select the text for this work and what are your memories of the performance?**

*Conductor Laurence Ewashko commissioned the piece for the 150th anniversary of the University of Ottawa. Rather than constructing an awkward hybrid of English and French lyrics, I decided to go to the main root of both languages: Latin. Composer and friend Ken*

*Clark recommended two books by Helen Waddell: Mediaeval Latin Lyrics and More Latin Lyrics. That's how I found the Boethius text, from his Consolation of Philosophy. The performance was fantastic. The musicians loved the piece, we got a standing-ovation, and I signed lots of autographs after the concert. My good friend JoséAntonio W. Danner, who would later direct Wrong Hollywood Number, was in tears. I'll never forget it. I should mention that conductor Philip Mackenzie and his Stockport Youth Orchestra, as well as several local choirs, performed the piece in a Christmas concert in Manchester, in 2004. Some of the musicians in that orchestra couldn't have been older than 12, and I was super-impressed with how well they handled my odd/alternating meters and key changes. Bravo to everybody involved, on both performances! Because of this interview, I just put the Ottawa recording on my website, as a free promotional download.*

**Like film music, concert pieces are often commissioned by someone. When this is the case, how restrictive are the patrons - do they make up demands about the orchestral palette, the mood, etc?**

*In the case of Consolatio, I was given a timeframe, in terms of running length (10-15 minutes), a list of orchestral instruments and voices (traditional symphony orchestra, pipe organ, SATB choir), and a request to keep the level of difficulty to something that a university orchestra and choir could handle. Since the occasion was an anniversary, the piece had to be generally festive and uplifting in nature. Those were fantastic guidelines, and I didn't feel restricted at all. Commissions are something special, and as a composer, you want to make the client happy because they put their trust in you.*

**Director Temi Lopez hired you based on the strength of Consolatio. How did you meet the**



**director and got hired for *Home: The Horror Story*?**



*I had answered an ad in Backstage West, and sent a demo to producer Dick Weaver who told Temi about my music. The three of us met and discussed the movie and what influences the music should draw from: Danny Elfman, Pérez Prado, etc. Temi kept talking about maracas. It was all a bit abstract to me until I actually first saw the movie, and it all fell into place, in terms of concept. I remember when, after working on many ideas for the main theme, Temi really got excited about this weird, lop-sided pseudo-waltz idea in 5/4 that I had written. That pretty much sealed the deal, and it was all crazy fun from that point on.*

**There seem to be no musical limits in the over-the-top *Home* score. How did you know how far are you were allowed to go?**

*The whole point of that movie was to not hold back. Yes, there is a solid structure to the story, but our main character, played by Richard Beymer, loses part of his brain, and from that moment on, his world spins out of control in a comedic, bizarre, over-the-top kind of way, so the music had to follow that path of craziness. The only thing I limited was the instrumentation: I kept it fairly small, with occasional bursts of orchestral bombast. I wanted the sound of the music to resemble that of a circus band, rather than a symphony orchestra.*

**It's evident from the recording that doing this score was a lot of fun. What was the best or most hilarious part of the recording process?**

*My good friend David Horne assembled a small group of guys, and we spent an hour or so recording funny noises, grunting, mumbling rapidly, wolf-whistling, sighing. Let's just say it was difficult not to burst into laughter and ruin a take in the process. It was almost like a bizarre frat party from hell.*

**This movie came fairly early in your career. Did you have any problems which came up because you were a relative novice as a film composer?**

*Not really, fortunately. At that point, I had written a lot of music for short films, and I had dealt with all kinds of director personalities. Temi was actually very good to work with. He gave very specific notes at times, and the music got better as a result. For the most part though, I just got his license to go nuts, musically speaking, so the whole process was quite therapeutic! ;-)*

**The Interior is a web series centered on a Christian couple moving into the jungle to do missionary work. How does scoring a web series differ from working on a feature film?**

*The interesting thing about The Interior is that director Helmut Schleppi and writer Geert Heetebrij originally intended it to be a feature film, and then later saw the potential of releasing it directly online, rather than finding a distributor. Internet series were a novel thing at the time. Most other series had an amateurish home-video look to them. In contrast, The Interior looks and feels like a movie. It was shot in Panama using professional equipment, edited by Radu Ion (who just worked on Death Race 2), and got a sound mix from Mathew Waters (who mixed Prison Break, When In Rome, Dominion, etc.). Those elements were already in place when I got involved. I had to jump in for composer Edward Rogers who had a scheduling conflict. Logistically, the main difference between feature film and internet series is that you're composing in small chunks. Episodes were roughly 4-7 minutes in length. The breaks sometimes happened in mid-scene, so I had to find ways to musically start and end each episode in a way that heightened tension but still was integral to the general feel of the show. Unfortunately, The Interior's website no longer exists because its creators have focused their attention on other projects, but I hope that the episodes will be*

*online again soon, hopefully on Vimeo or YouTube. The show was done really well, in all aspects, and I hope that more people will get to see it.*

**I really like the whole steamy feeling of the score. Could explain how you came up with the orchestral palette?**

*There are a lot of mysterious and weird things going on in the Interior. I used mostly electronics to convey a sense of mystery, disorientation, etc. Occasionally, there are woodwind solos and wordless vocals by Mike Ator. The relationship between Bonni and Michael is underscored with some piano fragments, and the "Call" motif is usually played by harp. I also added some processed percussion. The idea was to take acoustic sources with an organic sound and twist them, using electronics.*

**How did you get singer Mike Ator involved in recording the show's main theme, The Gold You Seek?**

*I had discovered Mike's incredibly powerful songwriting through MySpace. Most of his material at the time was based in country music, so I didn't automatically think of him when it came to recording some edgy rock. When Helmut was looking for a main title song, he asked me if I knew bands that could help out by placing a track. I suggested that it would probably be best to develop an original song for the series. I submitted an instrumental demo, which Helmut loved. My original singer had to bow out because of logistical reasons, so I asked Mike if he was interested, and within a day, he wrote the lyrics, came up with a melody on top of my instrumentals, and recorded the first vocals tracks. I think we were able to create something truly unique for the series. The song is like nothing else I have heard before, or since.*

**Your release  
Cheshire  
Adventures  
features**



scores from three unique short films produced by people with and without disabilities at



the Cheshire Film Camp. How did you get in contact with the organization, and how many film camps have you contributed to?

*If I recall correctly, Andrew Mudge, the director of The Return Of The Muskrats, placed an ad on CraigsList, looking for an editor, and my friend, JoséAntonio W. Danner, answered it. The project was very tricky because Andrew had shot a lot of footage of people singing portions of songs, sometimes in different locations, and JoséAntonio had to edit those chunks together so they made sense. I then added instrumental accompaniment to the footage. Sometimes, I had to move audio snippets of the vocals, so they would better follow a logical tempo map. I sent my recordings back to JoséAntonio, and he changed his edit accordingly. We made it work, and everybody was very pleased with the results. I have scored every Cheshire film since then. They make one every year, so the total is 5 by now.*

**Since very few people could have seen them, could you introduce the three productions a bit?**

*The Cheshire Film Camp is now run by Zeno Mountain Farm, their videos are posted on their Vimeo page. All short films were produced by the wonderful Will Halby. The first one I scored for them is called, The Return Of The Muskrats, and it tells the story of a soap opera star who has to face his secret past as a pirate captain when a friend gets kidnapped by the evil Hellcats pirates. It's an adventure/musical extravaganza, and a lot of fun to watch. That was followed by Sky Squad Eagle Eight (also directed by Andrew Mudge), which tells the story of a comic book nerd who joins a secret group of superheroes. The third project was Selling The Future: The Adventure Of Lenny*

*Maloney (directed by Brian Pargac), a time travel adventure about a car salesman who learns an important lesson about taking responsibility for his actions. Those are the three movies included in the Cheshire Adventures album. I have since scored 2 more short films for them: the "rockumentary" The Greatest Song Ever Written, and the horror comedy, In The Pines. Their latest project, an inspirational sports story, is going into post production.*

**How do you write music for these films? Who do you communicate with / show the music to?**

*I usually communicate with the director and the producer, just like on every other movie. The process itself is identical. The only difference is that nobody is getting paid, so we're just doing this to make the campers happy, and to help raise awareness for a wonderful organization.*

**The score for the short movie Wrong Hollywood Number was recorded with the London Metropolitan Orchestra. How did you get such a prestigious group for a short movie?**

*When José Antonio W. Danner wrote the screenplay for Wrong Hollywood Number, he promised me that there would be an orchestra. I appreciated the thought, but didn't really believe he would be able to pay for an actual orchestra, much less the London Metropolitan Orchestra. However, when JoséAntonio organized the shoot, my expectations started to shift. His point was to make a dream come true, and I have never seen a guy more dedicated than him. All of his personal money went into the project, and he had the amazing ability to get others excited about his short film. JoséAntonio's aim was to create a truly professional product, solely on the strength of his story idea, and it worked: Panavision, Kodak, Cinesite, and other companies provided their services for free, or for a small fraction of their usual cost. Similarly, LMO contractor Andy Brown, recording engineer Mike Ross-Trevor, and scoring mixer Dennis*

*S. Sands kindly helped JoséAntonio and me to make that dream a reality. The process was hard and stressful, especially for JoséAntonio, who was living in his car for most of the duration of the project, but it was an incredible ride. The result can now be seen on [YouTube](#).*

**Your score for the animation short [Azureus Rising](#) is also far above the usual short film fare. How did writing for animation differ from doing live action?**

*Thanks for the kind words! I have to say that I was simply blown away when I saw the first, fully-rendered shots from Azureus Rising. I think it's very rare to find footage of that quality, produced by an independent company rather than an established film studio. David Weinstein and his team at Black Sun Entertainment really created something outstanding, and I am glad that David has gotten a lot of attention lately, as a result. In terms of the differences between live action and animation: In this particular case, I was not given a rough cut of the entire short, as would be the case in live action. Instead, I scored small chunks of finished animation, or temporary animation. The schedule was very relaxed because I was often waiting for new footage to come in. Animation is a very time-consuming process, so if you are involved as a composer early on, you get some breaks during which you can refine or revise your work. It all happened very organically, and there never was a crazy deadline to chase after, which was nice.*

**Could you explain a bit about the Scrap Metal bits on your release of the score? Where did they exactly originate, what's their story?**



*When I thought about releasing an EP, I wanted to give the listener more than just the music as it appears in the short, which is only 5½ minutes long. In the process of working on*

*the score, I had developed some material which needed to be revised. This is very common in film music. The abandoned alternates might show up on a special edition soundtrack release, or might find their way into music libraries. I thought that the alternates from Azureus Rising would make a nice addition to the soundtrack EP, so I edited them together and created some transitional material. The soundtrack is available for free on my [website](#).*

**You're not the first composer on your recent credit, Broken Angel. Why were you brought into the project? What did your music provide that the previous score didn't?**

*Broken Angel was originally released theatrically in Turkey, in 2008. It is based on true events chronicling a young Turkish woman's trip to Los Angeles to study English, and her subsequent, mysterious disappearance. Since most of the dialog is actually in English, the producers wanted to release the movie in the U.S.. For reasons unknown to me, director Aclan Bates left the project, and editor Radu Ion took over as post production supervisor. I think Radu did a terrific job, tightening the narrative and truly improving the flow of the movie. As a result, the original score didn't fit anymore, and Radu wanted to take the music in a more contemporary, gritty direction. His instincts were spot-on. The story is already very powerful; there's no need to make it overly melodramatic. I am told that the movie will be released soon. I think that Nehir Erdogan gave an utterly convincing, nuanced performance. Her character goes through a heartbreaking transformation, and Nehir did such a fine job!*

**Did you research Turkish music in particular for this movie? What are some of the special instruments you're using?**

*The movie tells a universal, fish-out-of-water story, and it demonstrated the dangers of what can happen if you naively trust the wrong people. Everybody can relate to that, and very*

early on, even before the first score existed, the decision was made to avoid anything specifically Turkish in the music. I like traditional Turkish music, especially its frequent syncopations and occasional use of odd meters. In the case of Broken Angel, I may have been inspired by some of that, but the goal was to not be too specific in terms of locale. The movie actually takes place in Los Angeles, in its entirety, and as you know, Los Angeles is a fascinating melting pot of many cultures. Regarding instrumentation, I decided to use bansuri and hotchiku (performed beautifully by Sandro Friedrich), some subtle textures on acoustic guitar (performed by Leonardo Tuchermann), and electronics. I am a fan of John Murphy's work, which often manages to be subtle and dramatically powerful at the same time. There's nothing in Broken Angel which sounds exactly like John Murphy but I wanted to apply what I understood to be his philosophy of film scoring. For instance, in a scene of personal disintegration and desperation, instead of playing the melodrama by layering string textures and piano, I chose to use muffled percussion loops, some filtered synth pads, and a processed vibraphone. I wanted to make the score non-traditional but still dramatically impactful.

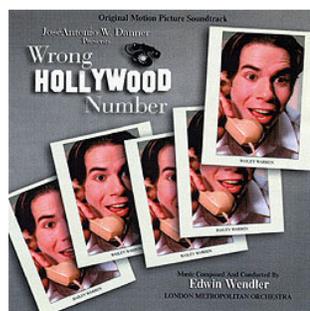
**How did the song "Now I Know" come about? What's its role in the movie?**

One of the co-producers/investors on Broken Angel is Mark Flather. His wife, a lawyer, also happens to be a lyricist, and a really good one at that! Samantha knew everything about the movie, about the story, about the making of the movie. She had been very passionate about the story for many months, so she became the logical choice to write the lyrics. She would email me some words which I would set to music. Then, I would compose a section of the song that she wrote lyrics for. Both of us adjusted our work accordingly. It was a very enjoyable collaboration, and we were lucky to find singer Autumn Kramer, through my friend Tom Boyd. The song forms an epilogue to the

*story, and runs during the movie's end credits.*

**You've recently completed music for the yuletide comedy/drama *Christmas With A Capital C*. In a subgenre that's dominated by Christmas standards, what new can you bring to the table with this score?**

*This project happened so fast. I literally had two weeks to score an entire feature film, so I had very little time to think about it conceptually. Immediately after receiving picture, I had to just write. In the process, I stayed away from any of the established Christmas songs. The movie itself features some traditional Christmas carols, some of them performed on screen, but the score needed to get into the characters' minds and hearts, and not get distracted by quotes or hints of pre-existing music. So, I wrote one main theme for the community, specifically their leader, the mayor (played by Ted McGinley), and a secondary motif for the antagonist (played by Daniel Baldwin). Interestingly, both thematic ideas are likeable in nature, because in this story, there is no right and wrong in the debate over religion versus the law, and the antagonist is often correct in his views, and eventually becomes more of a catalyst than a destructive force. While I am not religious myself, I could strongly identify with the message of community, and caring for each other, no matter who you are or what ideas you hold dear, as long as those ideas are not destructive in nature.*



**Since working in America, have you ever been asked by Austrian filmmakers to contribute to their movies?**

*The one-word answer would be, "No". The truth is, my music is still "too Hollywood" for Austria. I feel comfortable writing gritty, non-traditional music, but that doesn't seem to have an organic place in Austrian cinema, either. But no matter where*

*the project comes from, as long as it's professionally done, interesting and entertaining, I'd be thrilled to work on it. So, I don't want to close any doors, and Austria has had some great success lately, even winning an Academy Award in 2008, and being nominated again in 2009.*

### **What's next up on your schedule?**

*In this day and age of ubiquitous score replacements, I have become very cautious about answering that question. I have read too many interviews with composers who were very excited about upcoming projects from which they later got fired, yet the record remains and points out the tragic aspects of their firing while often burying the facts under a shroud of secrecy and political correctness. So, I've made it my philosophy to not talk about any upcoming projects until their release is imminent. So, all I can say for now is that *Christmas With A Capital C* is scheduled for release on DVD in November, with a possible soundtrack release at around the same time. Many thanks for giving me the opportunity to answer your excellent, well-informed questions! And a special shout out to the listeners: Thank you so much for spending some of your time with my music!*

*Special thanks to Victor Kaply at [Westwood Music Group](#)*

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