Revitalizing "the Rocky Horror Show" Through Gospel Music

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REVITALIZING “THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW”
THROUGH GOSPEL MUSIC

by

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B.A. Central Washington University, 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment in the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
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ABSTRACT

In Spring 2007, the University of Central Florida (UCF) Department of Theatre mounted a production of *The Rocky Horror Show*. This thesis focuses on the author's process of using the gospel music style to revitalize *The Rocky Horror Show*, a cult musical.

The author uses defining characteristics of the cult film genre to establish a set of guidelines. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is the movie version of the stage musical and is responsible for the show's inevitable cult status. He discusses the history and journey of *The Rocky Horror Show* and how audience participation was integral in establishing this landmark musical.

The reader observes the process used in rearranging *The Rocky Horror Show* score from start to finish and recordings used as influence throughout. Although this is a discussion of a musical process, this portion of the document is written in terms for all to understand, and a glossary of terms is provided for those that are unsure of certain vocabulary.

With a show that is well established, one must be careful when making stylistic changes. The author took this into consideration when arranging the score and rationalizes through a discussion of gospel music history, key gospel elements apparent throughout the score, and how the essence of Richard O'Brien's music remains intact.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF FIGURES** ................................................................................................................................. vi

**CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION** ........................................................................................................ 1

**CHAPTER TWO – “ROCKY” CULT HISTORY** ....................................................................................... 4

  Section One – Defining Criterion of a Cult film, and How “Rocky” Fits the Bill................ 4
  The Film Must be Screened at Irregular Hours and These Screenings Must Play on a Regular and Continuing Basis........................................................................... 5
  Cult Films May be Uniquely Characterized by the Repeated Attendance of a Group of Certain Individuals… Typically Young, Single, and a High School or College Student..................................................................................................................... 5

  Section Two – The Genesis of “Rocky” and its “Cult”-ivation........................................... 6

  Section Three – Audience Participation........................................................................ 8

**CHAPTER THREE – THE PROCESS** .................................................................................................... 12

  Glossary of Terms for Chapter Three ........................................................................... 36

**CHAPTER FOUR - GOSPEL** ................................................................................................................. 37

  Section One - Roots ........................................................................................................... 37

  Section Two – Gospel Influence in Popular Music.......................................................... 39
  The A cappella Style Vocal Groups.............................................................................. 42
  The Call-and-Response “Preaching” Style Drawn From the Church.............................. 42
  The Syncopated Dance Rhythms of the Hand-Clapping and Body Shaking Rituals of Church Participation......................................................................................................................... 43
  The Virtuosic Use of Ornamentation in Solo Singing, Particularly in Female Solo Voices............................................................................................................................................ 43

  Section Three – Conveying Gospel to the UCF Ensemble......................................... 44

**CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION** ........................................................................................................ 48

**CHAPTER SIX - JOURNAL** ................................................................................................................. 50

**APPENDIX LETTER OF COPYRIGHT PERMISSION FROM SAMUEL FRENCH** .................................. 72

**REFERENCES** .................................................................................................................................... 74
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Comparison Table of “Rocky Horror” Recordings .................................................. 15
Figure 2 “Road Map” of “Science Fiction, Double Feature” Arrangement ...................... 17
Figure 3 Samuel French Version of “The Rocky Horror Show” Score See Appendix for
   Copyright Permission ........................................................................................................ 25
Figure 4 My Version of “The Rocky Horror Show” Score, and ....................................... 35
Figure 5 Examples of Popular Musicians Used to Communicate Style............................ 40
Figure 6 Letter of Explanation to the Cast for The Rocky Horror Gospel Listening CD 45
Figure 7 Letter of Explanation to the Band For The Rocky Horror Show Listening CD 46
CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

There are different definitions for the word “cult”, and most of them carry a negative connotation. Its origin dates to the early 17th century from the French word *culte* or Latin *cultus*, and refers to the “care, cultivation or worship” paid to divinity (Harper). Over the centuries, and particularly in the 20th century with the introduction of mass media, the word has evolved also to reference “a person or thing that is popular or fashionable, especially among a particular section of society” (Oxford English Dictionary). This definition best describes popular mediums like film.

Theatre in the early- to mid-seventies enjoyed a new wave of popularity that was missing since the days of Noel Coward and Ivor Novello (Michaels 24). Musicals like *Hair*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell* bred “music stars and music that the non-theater going public also bought” (24). Richard O’Brien took advantage of the new wave and created a show that was revolutionary for its time. *The Rocky Horror Show* and its journey spawned a unique cult.

With a show that is well established, one must be careful when making stylistic changes. This author considered the challenge carefully when rearranging the score for *The Rocky Horror Show*. But how does one go about that without disturbing a show that had thrived for almost 35 years without significant alterations? It didn’t need me to survive. I knew, whatever changes would follow, I needed to respect and pay homage to Richard O’Brien’s music. I could not lose the essence of what he had written.

The idea to rearrange the score in a gospel style came when I was listening to "Once in a While" on The New Broadway Cast recording. It was the first song I finished,
and it lent itself easily to the gospel/rock style. As a rock-based musical, *The Rocky Horror Show* already had gospel elements in its roots. All I had to do was make them more evident. It was this realization that revealed gospel as the key to revitalizing *The Rocky Horror Show*. It didn’t need to be rewritten, but I wanted to bring a fresh feel to it.

Gospel music originated from the despair that African-Americans have endured since coming to North America. Music provided a means of coping. Steve Tracy refers to the objectification of African-Americans as “primitive, exotic, ignorant, violent, sexualized, degraded non-humans, forming a network of attitudes and values that [protract a] brutalizing environment” (90). Sadly, this viewpoint is not ancient history.

Even today, as it was in 1974 (the US premiere of *The Rocky Horror Show*), a similar prejudice is aimed at homosexuals, transsexuals and anyone who embraces such variations in lifestyle. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* provided a refuge for those struggling with these issues and with their identities. It became a voice for those who could not speak out and created an atmosphere in which they felt safe, if only for two hours on a Friday or Saturday night.

Susan Sarandon, who played Janet in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, believes the show creates a safe and supportive environment for young people who don’t fit in “the cheerleader crowd.” She states, “There has got to be something about that which speaks to them and gives them acceptance for whatever gender-bending or questioning that [they] have, and acceptance for who [they] are” (Michaels 267). *The Rocky Horror Show* may be perceived as one hour and forty-five minutes of fun, but the support it
provided its audience at the time of its origin also speaks to its popularity and its inevitable cult status.

It is interesting to consider the correlation between the word “cult” and religion in the case of the University of Central Florida (UCF) production of Rocky Horror. Gospel music infused with the message of Rocky Horror could invite criticism. Some might think it sacrilegious to combine a “spiritually-inspired” sound with music that tells stories of “Sweet Transvestite[s] from Transsexual, Transylvania.” There are two points that contradict that edict. First, gospel is so engrained in the roots of American popular music today, it has lost much of its “spiritual” meaning in the context of a stage production. Second, gospel in its simplest form is a message of love, peace and acceptance. As such, I could think of no better style with which to fuse The Rocky Horror Show than gospel.
CHAPTER TWO – “ROCKY” CULT HISTORY

Section One – Defining Criterion of a Cult film, and How “Rocky” Fits the Bill.

A broad “Google” search defines a cult film as “a movie that attracts a small but devoted group of obsessive fans or one that has remained popular over successive years amongst a small group of followers.” In order to understand how and why The Rocky Horror Show became a cult as a theatrical production, one must consider The Rocky Horror Picture Show, the film version. It is because of this version that the stage production achieved cult status. But what defines a cult film, and how does it achieve this status? Monaco defines cult films as a “private genre” of “the privileged children of the middle class (66). The characters in these films are often “egregiously eccentric”, he says (276). Austin asserts the films often operate on a low budget using “on-location settings” (43). He also notes that the production companies in charge of distributing these films rarely meet industry standards in this aspect and remarks “cult films are not made as much as they happen or become” (43-44). In other words, the filmmaker’s objective is never to create a cult film from the outset. The Rocky Horror Picture Show meets these requirements.

In his article Portrait of a Cult Film Audience: The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Bruce A. Austin delves into the minds and actions of Rocky Horror fans. It is through his research and study that Austin was able to derive two “defining aspects” which characterize cult film as a genre (44). These aspects are the guideposts I will use in distinguishing The Rocky Horror Picture Show as a cult film.
The Film Must be Screened at Irregular Hours and These Screenings Must Play on a Regular and Continuing Basis

*The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is screened all over the United States on a monthly, and even a weekly, basis. Dates of these screenings are posted on various websites. At Universal City-Walk in Orlando, Florida one can watch the movie every Friday and Saturday at midnight.

Conversely, Austin’s criterion excludes similarly widely popular movies such as *Star Wars*. This film has a large following but cannot be considered a “cult film” because it is not screened at a mass level on a regular basis.

Cult Films May be Uniquely Characterized by the Repeated Attendance of a Group of Certain Individuals… Typically Young, Single, and a High School or College Student

*The Rocky Horror Picture Show* entertains a regular fan base, loyal to their ritual of dressing up and participating in the fun. It is not uncommon to find a fan who has seen the movie hundreds of times.

Austin comments on the popularity of the Marx Brothers films to differentiate this genre from the “cult” genre. Clearly, the Marx Brothers films have a mass following and are very popular. However, the “continuing exhibition criterion” is not met, and, therefore, cannot be classified as a cult film (45). The same could be said of *The Monty Python* series and others of this type.
Section Two – The Genesis of “Rocky” and its “Cult”-ivation

How *Rocky* was born and who is responsible for it is a discussion up for debate among the original production team of *Rocky Horror*. One thing that cannot be disputed is if it were not for Richard O’Brien, the show would not exist. The idea for the show and the music are completely his. He is also credited with the script, but many who were involved in the original project argue this point. As the show became more popular, however, O’Brien gradually lost creative control. He recalls when *The Rocky Horror Show* came to the Roxy Theatre in Los Angeles, none of the marketing for the show included his name. The same marketing materials were displayed once the show opened on Broadway. Since then, O’Brien insists that his name appear above the title: *Richard O’Brien’s Rocky Horror Show*. His mantra is “include me” (Michaels 29).

The *Rocky Horror* journey began in Richard O’Brien’s rundown apartment when he was an out-of-work actor with a wife and child to support. In an attempt to fill time and to try to make money for his family, he started writing songs he liked and combining them with some B-movie gags. He was an enthusiastic fan of science fiction B-movies. He never set out to write a cult show – it just happened (42). Earlier that year, O’Brien had worked as Herod in *Jesus Christ Superstar* with director Jim Sharman. After this experience, he decided to present his original *Rocky* script to Sharman. Sharman claimed, “When Richard passed [the original script] over to me, I just yawned. Out of politeness, I actually read it” (149). Sharman saw promise in the script but recognized it needed work. He struck out to find a producer and venue for the project.
Sharman approached theatrical producer, Michael White, with O’Brien’s music. After hearing some of the music, White agreed to put forth £1000. Pat Quinn, the original Magenta, recalls the initial budget for the show totaling £2000 after The Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in London, England agreed to match it and provide the venue (132). This is roughly equivalent to $820 US dollars in 1973. With a budget and a theatre, Sharman assembled a team, and they began to work on the show.

Sharman approached Brian Thompson to design the original production of Rocky, and he would design the movie as well. On the limited budget with which they were working, Thompson knew he would not make a lot of money on this project. Sharman and Thompson worked together on several well-known productions in Australia such as Hair, Jesus Christ Superstar, and Grease (66). They were a close team.

It is important at this point to introduce discrepancies in reports of how the script was produced. Thompson resents Richard O’Brien’s insistence upon his name above the title and the claim to have written the book. He remembers the early stages, and while he concedes the entire show was made of O’Brien’s songs, he is steadfast that Jim Sharman is the one who put them in a specific order for a plot, and only then did Richard O’Brien write a simple plot to weave them together. His original script does not resemble the final product. Thompson insists the fleshing out of the script and the final iteration of the show was a collaborative effort between himself, Jim, Richard, and even some cast members (70).
Regardless of who wrote what, on June 16, 1973 the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs opened *The Rocky Horror Show*. While it did achieve success there, it did not become a cult until after the movie’s release. The show ran at various theatres for seven more years and closed on September 13, 1980 (Shetterly). The Roxy Theatre in Los Angeles introduced *The Rocky Horror Show* to the United States on March 19, 1974. Filming began later that year on location in Windsor, England for *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, with a $1 million budget. The stage version premiered in Broadway in 1975 and closed after only forty-five performances. On September 26, 1975, the movie was released in the US and flopped more quickly than the Broadway debut. It was not until 1976 that a small theatre in Greenwich Village, NY breathed new life into *Rocky* by giving it a midnight time slot.

**Section Three – Audience Participation**

The audience participation aspect of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is where the cult begins to take root. The audience responses to the screen interweave so well with the movie dialogue it almost seems as though they were written in. Richard Hartley, the original arranger of the music, theorized about the reasons for the audience participation. “It’s because the film is so slow. It’s so boring that people had to make up lines to make it entertaining… It restored the theatricality” (Michaels 100).

The movie audience firmly restored the theatricality. Since moving to Broadway, the theatrical version had failed. It is possible the stage version would have never recovered if it were not for the movie’s success and the mystique that surrounded it.
After the popularity of the film, more and more stage productions began appearing, and fans would go expecting the movie version.

David Evans, co-author of *Rocky Horror: From Concept to Cult*, claims, “The play is completely gone now. [It can never be done] again” (101). This assertion is in reference to the audience participation the movie spawned. Audiences can no longer go to the theatre without linking the experience to the movie they all know and love. Evans states further “the audience participation is now so deep-rooted in popular perception that the play has been buried deep beneath the charade. Richard O’Brien’s simple little idea has become a charnel house of unexhumable remains” (101).

Evans holds a rather grim outlook on the subject of audience participation, but there are those from the *Rocky Horror* family who know the show’s perpetual popularity is founded on it. Sue Blane, the original costume designer, points out the audience participation is “very funny, but on the other hand it doesn’t allow you to see what a damn good piece of theatre it is. The script is really tight, very funny. The music is sensationally good.” While she recognizes this fact, she maintains the reason for the success of the show is the audience participation. She laments the fact that one will never be able to see the show in its original form, but “celebrates” the evolution it’s taken (106).

One might wonder if it is ever possible to know exactly when and how the audience participation began. Actually, there is a source that can answer this question. Sal Piro is the president of the *The Official Rocky Horror Fan Club* and recognized as a
respected expert even by the creators/collaborators of the original project. He sheds light on the origin of audience participation.

The midnight performances were a success before the audience participation aspect of the show was even an idea. The original producer of the theatrical experience, Michael White, insists that the first midnight screening of the show was on campus at the University of Texas, Austin (332). In fact, this theatre was three weeks behind the original midnight slot at the Waverly Theatre at Greenwich Village in January 1977 (Shetterly). White is correct, however, in his assertion that UT was one of the largest college towns in the United States at that time (Michaels 113). This propelled the Rocky Horror phenomenon and, after only one year, one hundred theatres in the United States had regular midnight showings of The Rocky Horror Picture Show. This figure doubled after only two years (332).

Sal Piro first saw the movie in December of 1976. At the time, audiences were “merely polite” (332). Piro recalls it taking almost 18 months (of regular viewing on his part) before the audience participation was even noticeable. He credits his friend, Louis Farese, a kindergarten teacher, as the first to yell a line back to the screen. Preceding Over at the Frankenstein Place, Janet uses a newspaper to shield herself from the rain. Farese followed through on an impulse to shout, “Buy an umbrella, ya’ cheap bitch!” This occurred at the theatre where the midnight showings began, at the Waverly (332).

In late September 1976, a few people took audience participation to the next level, and arrived at the theatre in full costume as if they were a part of the movie itself. Shortly following that, on Halloween, the entire theatre was full of fans dressed as
characters from the movie. Things progressed from there, and the costumes became more creative, the screen retorts more outrageous. It was at this point fans began restoring the “theatricality” to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* experience (Shetterly).

Thus, the show had come almost full circle. The irony of the theatrical version “flopping” in New York and the film thriving because of the theatricality brought to it is significant. Even more ironic is its “rebirth”, which took place in the very city that shunned it only one year earlier. Subsequently, the theatrical version was catapulted to a new level because of the success of the movie. Hence, Sue Blane’s assertion, “You will never witness the original again because of the audience participation” (Michaels 106). While Blane’s claim is true, the original stage version may have been completely forgotten if it were not for audience participation in the movie version. This breathed new life into a fading piece of theatre and established *The Rocky Horror Show* as a cult musical.
CHAPTER THREE – THE PROCESS

Earl D. Weaver, professor of Musical Theatre at The University of Central Florida (UCF), contacted me about music directing UCF’s Spring production of The Rocky Horror Show. He had already approached my classmate, Tim Ellis, about choreographing the production, and Tim recommended me for the project. Tim and I would not be the only students on the production team; almost the entire production was student run.

During my first meeting with Professor Weaver, he let me know the entire Rocky Horror score was hand written and there were no vocal parts, only solo lines. After this discussion, we agreed I would listen to the new Broadway cast recording and I would lift the ensemble vocal parts. I left the meeting knowing I had a lot of work to do, but I was excited about the task ahead of me. I spent a lot of my undergraduate career as a music education major writing and arranging for ensembles, and I was pleased to engage in this activity at a higher level as part of my graduate studies.

I realized I wanted to go further than simply lifting the ensemble parts. I knew I was going to put a lot of time into this and wanted the arrangements to bear my personal stamp. I decided to not only transcribe the vocal parts but also to rewrite them in a style with different harmonies and rhythms.

I proposed this idea to Professor Weaver and, in favor of it, he responded, “It's your show baby!” I began listening to three different cast recordings-- the new Broadway cast recording, the original Roxy cast and The Rocky Horror Picture Show soundtrack --to get as many perspectives as possible. Upon hearing the song Once in
a While on the new Broadway cast recording, I noticed it had a very Country and Western feel to it, which could lend itself easily to a gospel sound. Immediately, I heard comparisons in my mind to what is recognized as the “most familiar recording in gospel music history,” Oh Happy Day (Boone “Twelve Key Recordings: Oh Happy Day” 86).

Once in a While gave me a place from which to start this process. I knew at that point I was going with a gospel feel to the show. This was the first song I arranged, and from this, I formulated a process I could apply to the entire score. Since the new Broadway cast recording was what sparked the idea, I went back to it and took general notes and observations. From there, I was able to pull from styles, techniques and even possible melody lines I wanted to use in my arrangement. This recording proved useful in the final product. I did draw some melody lines from the recording and also styles such as the rubato beginning to the song.

I applied the same process to the Roxy cast recording of Once in a While. While I did not find anything I wanted to apply directly to my final arrangement, it was still useful to record general observations of the song and hear another take on it. The recording that proved most useful in my final arrangement of Once in a While was The Edwin Hawkins’ Singers recording of Oh Happy Day. More than any other, this recording provided key gospel techniques I knew I could apply to Once in a While.

The Edwin Hawkins recording starts with a vamp like pattern in the band of piano, bass, drums and conga at a very relaxed tempo. The harmony is very straightforward and there is an intervallic relationship between I and IV chords. Over this support from the band, the choir and soloist engage in a call-and-response fashion
throughout the entire song ("Twelve Key Recordings: Oh Happy Day" 87). It was this use of call-and-response that would set the gospel tone for *The Rocky Horror Show*.

The observations made from the multiple recordings made it possible for me to create a “road map” or outline of *Once in a While*. I employed this “road map” to help me develop my final arrangement. After finishing *Once in a While*, I had a definitive process in which to approach each following song. The figures below illustrate the process using *Science Fiction, Double Feature* as an example.

Before writing anything down for subsequent songs, I made charts I could use to fill in information from each recording that would help me to create the “road map” (*figure 1*). The charts enabled me to see the notes I made from each recording side by side. By comparing my notes, I could easily discern the aspects of each recording I did or did not like, and which features I wanted to utilize.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science Fiction, Double Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Rocky Horror Picture Show Soundtrack</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tempo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\frac{1}{2}$ = 98 Slow/Steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk, Funky 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This slower tempo helps set up the rhyme and convey the story.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Legato, thick &quot;swoony&quot; backgrounds in ensemble.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "Sure contrast from verse to chorus." | "I don't like the "bow, bow"." | "Maybe a synchronized rhythm?"
| "I love where the backgrounds enter and exit, but not the backgrounds themselves." | "I need to set up Gospel tone right off the bat. Use of more harmonies in ensemble, synchronized rhythms, and a II-V7 cadence at the end." | "Second ushersette is great." |
| **Things I'd like to use in my arrangement** | **Things I'd like to use in my arrangement** | **Things I'd like to use in my arrangement** |
| "Story-telling aspect." | "Second ushersette, almost a direct lift off her counterpoint." | "Second ushersette, just more harmony." |
| "I don't like the "bow, bow"." | "I need to set up Gospel tone right off the bat. Use of more harmonies in ensemble, synchronized rhythms, and a II-V7 cadence at the end." | "I need to set up Gospel tone right off the bat. Use of more harmonies in ensemble, synchronized rhythms, and a II-V7 cadence at the end." |
After a chart was complete, I used it to design my plan for an arrangement. Starting with a road map enabled me to lay out each song in a specific manner so I knew exactly what I was going to do with each section of the form before I even started to write (figure 2). A form is traditionally sectioned off using letters. This helps one discern which parts of a song are similar or dissimilar from one another. For instance, in figure 2, there is more than one section labeled “A”. In this case, “A” refers to a section with the same or similar melody as any other segment labeled “A”. Conversely, any segment labeled “B” refers to a melody that differs from “A”. As a rule, when arranging, a song should build to an inevitable climax. Separating the song into sections serves as a marker to identify exactly where a change in texture or harmony should take place. Following these markers helps one decide how a song should build.

Once the “road map” was complete, I had a place from which to start writing. I knew I wanted a complete score for the ensemble to have in hand. It seemed important they be able to read any solo line, the accompaniment and their multi-part ensemble harmony line. The original score from the rental company Samuel French includes a shorthand piano accompaniment I used as a point of departure for creating my instrumental score.
Figure 2 “Road Map” of “Science Fiction, Double Feature” Arrangement
Using the music notation program *Finale*, I inputted the piano accompaniment provided in the Samuel French score. Rather than use the shorthand provided in that edition, I wrote the accompaniment out completely in most parts of the score. There were some sections where I changed the piano part completely, but for the most part, I used what Samuel French provided. In some songs, such as *Science Fiction, Double Feature*, the accompaniment is only provided in a lead sheet format. I also used this format in my score when this occurred. I created a lead sheet for a majority of *Science Fiction, Double Feature* because I did not want the same style for my arrangement that the Samuel French accompaniment provided. *Figure 3* displays the copy of *Science Fiction, Double Feature* sent by Samuel French.
SCIENCE FICTION

(CUE: "GLAD YOU COULD COME TO NIGHT..."

PITCH: 110

MAGENTA:

REALLY WAS ILL THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL BUT HE TOLD US WHERE WE STAND AND FLASH

(PIANO TACET UNTIL BAR 20)

GORDON WAS THERE IN SILVER UNDERWEAR, CLAUDE RAINS WAS THE INVISIBLE MAN THEN...
LEGEND.

In other words, when the tempo becomes faster, the legato playing is used to create a smooth and continuous melody. The legato technique involves gliding the bow along the strings without lifting it from the fingerboard, producing a sustained tone.

In this passage, the composer employs legato playing to create a romantic and flowing effect. The notes in the melody are played smoothly, with a continuous flow of sound, which enhances the emotional expression of the piece.

The legato playing in this excerpt is indicated by the use of a slur, which is a line connecting notes to show the smooth passage without breaks. The composer emphasizes the legato technique by varying the density of the notes, creating a sense of motion and fluidity in the music.
OH
AT THE LATE NIGHT DOUBLE FEATURE PICTURE.

SHOW I WANNA GO OR ON TO THE LATE NIGHT DOUBLE FEATURE PICTURE SHOW BY R.K.O.

OH TO THE LATE NIGHT DOUBLE FEATURE PICTURE.
Figure 3 Samuel French Version of “The Rocky Horror Show” Score
See Appendix for Copyright Permission
The Samuel French score does not provide a complete vocal ensemble part, and it is here the road map becomes useful. Once I input the accompaniment and the Usherette #1/Magenta solo line, I began to follow the outline.

The outline indicates next part of the form as the “first B”, and I specify I wanted the ensemble to sing “Modified ‘bow, bows.’” “Bow bows” may be nonsensical words, but they reflect the vocal sound on the recordings on which I based the arrangements. My notes indicate harmony with the soprano on the traditional melody and a syncopated rhythm. I also changed the syllables the ensemble sings. Even with these changes, the core of the music is still intact. One can still hear the same melody that is traditionally sung at this point in the piece, but with a new “feel.” From here, I continued to follow the outline section by section. *Figure 4* displays my final copy of *Science Fiction, Double Feature*. 
"Glad you could come tonight"

Magenta

Rhythm

A

© 2006, Frank N Furter, Inc.
Science Fiction, Double Feature

Mag: 
dead - by pace... it came from outer space and this is how the mes - sage ran... 

Res: 

"Sci - ence Fi - tion... Double Fea - ture"

SA: 

We - a - on... Bum - bum - bum - men

TB: 

*piano, drums, and bass

Res: 

A♭ B♭ E♭ Cm

Mag: 
Doc - tor X... will build a crea - ture... 

SA: 

We - a - oh... Bum - bum - bum - men

TB: 

Res: 

A♭ B♭ E♭ Cm

28
Science Fiction, Double Feature

5

Le-o G. Car-roll was over a bar-rel when ta-ran-tu-la took to the hills. And I

really got hot when I saw Joan ette Scott fight a triffid that spits poison and kills. Dura

E♭ D♭ A♭ E♭ D♭ A♭
Science Fiction, Double Feature

And rows said, "Prunes!" Gave him the runes and passing them used lots of skills and when

words col said George Pal to his bride, "I gonna give you some turrible chills."

Like a Science Fiction Double Feature
Doctor X _______ will build a creature _______

See and roids fighting _______ Brad and Janet _______

A♭ B♭ E♭ C major
Science Fiction, Double Feature

9

(show (I wan na go) to the late night double feature picture)

I wan na go to the late night double feature picture

late night double feature

E♭ Cm A♭ E♭

show by R. K. O.

show (by R. K. O.) to the late night double feature picture

late night double feature

E♭ Cm A♭ E♭
Figure 4 My Version of “The Rocky Horror Show” Score, and My Arrangement of “Science Fiction, Double Feature”
See Appendix for Copyright Permission
From the examples provided, one can see the different aspects of my final arrangements and how they differ from former treatments. While I employed many ideas from other recordings, there were rare instances in which I performed any direct lifts; I did not write down anything exactly as it is on a recording. There are examples when I directly lifted background melody lines, but expanded the harmony in the end, as in the section of Science Fiction, Double Feature labeled “tag to end” (figure 2).

Other examples in the score, such as Charles Atlas Song, in which the opening arrangement is completely original, were not taken from any of the recordings to which I listened, but rather are based on a gospel style. Regardless, my work resulted in a useable score from which future ensembles performing The Rocky Horror Show could work without having to learn the parts by rote.

Glossary of Terms for Chapter Three

Lift: to transcribe, or write down notes from a recording.

Arrangement: Adaptation of a piece of music for a medium other than that for which it was originally composed (Kennedy 28)

Form: The structure and design of a composition (261)

Lead Sheet: Referencing a sheet of music that does not give the instrumentalist any specific notation, but rather only chord symbols.
CHAPTER FOUR - GOSPEL

Section One - Roots

Thomas Dorsey, born July 1, 1899, is known as the “Father of Gospel Music” ("Thomas A. Dorsey"). Dorsey is the pivotal character in bringing contemporary “gospel songwriting and publishing” to the forefront (Cusic 52). He learned to play blues as a pianist at a young age and formulated gospel music as a combination of “Christian praise with the rhythms of jazz and the blues” ("Thomas A. Dorsey").

During the 1930s, the Depression swept through the nation and the United States needed inspiration more than ever. This period of time was the most productive for Dorsey and the country welcomed his optimism. Gospel had been around for years in the form of hymns and spirituals, but Dorsey took this to the next level incorporating blues rhythms, scales and chord progressions into his music (Cusic 53). This is the beginning of what we classify as “gospel music” today.

Mahalia Jackson, gospel chanteuse inspired by Dorsey, dubbed him as “Our Irving Berlin,” referring to African-Americans (53). Dorsey made it possible for singers like Jackson, “The Queen of Gospel,” (Boone "Twelve Key Recordings: Take My Hand, Precious Lord" 85) to usher in the “Golden Era of Gospel” (Cusic 53). This era took place from 1945-1960, and while Jackson had been in the spotlight for some time, this was her most affluent period. She is responsible for the gospel sound, styling, and even instrumentation that is still prevalent in contemporary gospel music.

While the piano is the most recognizable instrument within the context of gospel music, the organ is its closest counterpart. The effect of the Hammond organ brought an
entirely new layer to gospel music. The Hammond organ “supports the harmony with mid-register chords without adding any rhythmic interest,” according to York (139). The Hammond organ was introduced to gospel in 1937 through the music of Mahalia Jackson. Kenneth Morris is the musician who had the intuitiveness to combine the organ with the piano, knowing they would work in conjunction. If the organ had a sustained quality, then the piano could be more rhythmically complex, or vice versa. The organ could match the timbre and vibrato of the choir in a different register while the piano could support rhythmically and drive the momentum forward. This technique was used on nearly every song in the UCF production of *The Rocky Horror Show.*

York describes how the combined use of the piano and organ is the foundation of popular gospel today. In the 1970s, the use of the synthesizer became more common and the organ had evolved (139). By this time, the choice of the trade was the Hammond-B3 organ with Leslie rotary speaker cabinets. These speakers had a “rotating horn” atop the main speakers, which could throw the sound in different directions at different speeds. This produced various levels of effect in terms of how one perceived the sound (139). The combined use of organ and synthesizer was very prevalent in the UCF production of *The Rocky Horror Show.*

While it is important to note the effects of this instrument in gospel music, the organ’s influence in contemporary secular music must not be ignored. Graham Bond, a British pop musician, is credited for introducing the Hammond-B3 to popular music (140). He paved the way for the likes of Bruce Springsteen. Larry Goldings is a pianist well known for his “Hammond organ style on many keyboards.” He has “traversed not
only the wide spectrum of jazz where he is perhaps best known, but also the worlds of funk, pop, and electronic/alternative music” (productiveinsomnia.com). Musicians, such as these, who incorporated the use of the Hammond into their popular music introduced gospel elements to the general public. This contributed to bridging the gap between gospel music and UCF’s production of The Rocky Horror Show.

Section Two – Gospel Influence in Popular Music

There have been many mainstream musicians who found their “sound” and style through the influence of gospel music. As the most common instrument identified with the gospel form, the piano is still today the flagship of gospel music. With its “boogie-related elements,” it influenced many popular musicians such as, Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke, Jerry Lee Lewis, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Jimmie Hendrix, Billy Joel and Elton John (Headlam 182). I used many of these musicians’ styles multiple times in my version of The Rocky Horror Show score (figure 5).
Figure 5 Examples of Popular Musicians Used to Communicate Style

Time Warp and Sweet Transvestite. See Appendix for Copyright Permission.
While I was going for a “gospel” sound, I could still achieve that through the style of the listed musicians. This was a useful way to communicate to the band and singers as a sound for which to strive. The harmonies written into the score provided the gospel feel, and the approach of these popular musicians already had gospel elements built into their methods.

Ray Charles added gospel vocal and musical elements to his R&B style. He incorporated gospel piano licks and a back-up female chorus who “responded” to his lead vocals “in the manner of a church choir following the preacher” (Headlam 174). This is in the same vain as my use of the “Tranny Trio” in Sweet Transvestite, The Charles Atlas Reprise and Touch-a Touch Me. Charles’ recording of She’s All Right features repetitions “imitating gospel endings” (174). I utilized the same tool in the ending of Hot Patootie by setting the entire last page as two open vamps culminating in an “Amen” plagal cadence.

David Headlam assigned four key elements of gospel which are featured and appropriated to popular music and applicable to this discussion: “The a cappella style vocal groups, The call-and-response ‘preaching’ style drawn from the church, The syncopated dance rhythms of the hand-clapping and body shaking rituals of church participation, and the virtuosic use of ornamentation in vocal singing, particularly in female solo voices” (171). Each of these elements is found throughout my version of The Rocky Horror Show score.
The A cappella Style Vocal Groups

I featured this style, which originated in “Jubilee quartets” (171), in the opening of Charles Atlas Song. In this style, a chorus provides the harmonic structure, thus supporting the soloist. In Charles Atlas Song, this section is without meter and the ensemble followed the lead of Frank N Furter, the soloist, to achieve the harmonic shifts simultaneously.

The Call-and-Response “Preaching” Style Drawn From the Church

Call and response originated with the tradition of the preacher “calling” to his congregation, and they would in turn “respond” to his sermon. With the gospel preaching style being “sung”, this easily translated into song. The call traditionally falls on one chord and the response on another, “creating two layered melodies” (Boone "Twelve Key Recordings: Oh Happy Day").

While I did not follow this format precisely, one example of call-and-response in my score is Once in a While. Call-and-response is found throughout the score and throughout this song. From the ensemble’s entrance, they respond to Brad. At one point, Brad passes the baton to the ensemble and they are now the “callers” while Brad responds to them. After the key change when Brad sings his “improvised” melody, the ensemble places a solid foundation for him to sing over, thus creating “two layered melodies.”
The Syncopated Dance Rhythms of the Hand-Clapping and Body Shaking Rituals of Church Participation

This element was evident in virtually every song in my score. It is built into the music and cannot be escaped. However, the example provided is one that was visible for the audience.

Tim Ellis (choreographer for UCF production) and I discussed the idea of using tambourines for *Hot Patootie*. When arranging this song, specifically, I had a gospel revival in mind, and I knew I wanted tambourines and the ensemble to be very involved. Tim had a great idea to “fly in” the tambourines, and each ensemble member would grab one. This worked wonderfully, and the revival atmosphere was successful.

The Virtuosic Use of Ornamentation in Solo Singing, Particularly in Female Solo Voices

While melodies were written out for soloists, I encouraged the singers to try new things and improvise new melodies. I knew this was a key element in achieving the gospel sound desired. Soloists were successful in experimenting, and when they tried something that did not fit, I encouraged them to keep trying.

A prime opportunity for this was after the key change in *Once In A While*. This song builds to the key change and climaxes at the end of the song. I discussed with the actor playing Brad that I did not want him to sing exactly what was on the page. He struggled with finding a melody that would fit, and eventually I wrote out a new melody for him. I hesitated, because I wanted this section to sound improvised. It is not
possible to write an improvised melody; it defeats the purpose. I did my best to write something based on the original melody that would at least appear improvised to the first time listener. I believe “Brad” achieved success here.

Section Three – Conveying Gospel to the UCF Ensemble

It was important the ensemble understand gospel as a style before even stepping foot into the first rehearsal. To understand an improvisational style, the best way one can learn is through listening. The ensemble needed to start training their ears immediately. I had a feeling they would have previous recordings of The Rocky Horror Show embedded in their memory, and I needed them to assume a different perspective without delay. To help them with this, I provided a gospel listening CD with a letter of explanation (figure 6).
Dear Rocky Horror Cast,

Hello! I am so excited to begin work on the music for "Rocky Horror." In preparation for our first rehearsal I have compiled a listening CD of various gospel groups.

**Disclaimer:** In no way, whatsoever, is this CD an effort to convert/recruit you to any sort of religion, cult, or any other affiliations!!!

The point of this CD is merely to help us all grasp musical sounds and concepts we will be working toward in our work with "Rocky Horror". For those of you who haven't heard, we are going for a Gospel/Rock approach to the musical aspect of the show.

I encourage you to listen to at least one song from this CD on a daily basis between now and our first rehearsal. Listening is the best tool in the world to achieve any musical goal. By listening to this CD regularly you will begin to get a feel for the music, and apply it to your parts in the "Rocky Horror" score.

Please call or email me with any questions!

Kip Taisey

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Figure 6 Letter of Explanation to the Cast for The Rocky Horror Gospel Listening CD

Even with this effort put forth, I knew I could not force any of the cast to listen to the CD or prepare for the first rehearsal accordingly. I recognized most of our work toward achieving a gospel sound would come from our time in rehearsal. The cast did respond well to the CD, however, and it was apparent that many of them had listened to it.

Communicating with the band required a similar approach. I also wanted them to start listening to the gospel style as soon as possible. However, since they were going to be playing the music of *Rocky Horror*, I needed to provide them with recordings from the show as well. I compiled a mixed CD utilizing the three recordings on which I based
the arrangements. While this did not provide them with the songs in the exact style we would eventually perform them, it did give them a place from which to start practicing. I also encouraged an environment of collaboration and improvisation, common in gospel music. The letter provided for the band is displayed in figure 7.

Figure 7 Letter of Explanation to the Band For The Rocky Horror Show Listening CD

The UCF ensemble achieved the gospel sound for which I was striving and the band followed through with great support for the ensemble. Since this music is not completely written out for all of the instruments, I had to communicate through song examples. When I was not able to convey precise ideas using words, I would play them
an example from various gospel recordings. This helped and proved successful, because a majority of the band was used to playing in this collaborative style. It was difficult to communicate this way with our saxophonist, as she wanted everything precisely written as she was to play it. This attitude would be expected from most bands/orchestras in any other traditional setting. However, this was not the approach I had taken with the UCF production of *The Rocky Horror Show*. This approach requires players with a different background and mindset.

Ironically, in my effort to attain a gospel sound for this production, I stripped away one key element of the gospel tradition. True gospel ensembles rarely transcribe or write down music. Music is almost always taught by rote, and if it is handed out, it is usually just the melody and only used for lyrics (Cusic 54). In my effort to transform the *Rocky Horror* score into a gospel style, or at least to incorporate gospel elements, I transcribed the vocal parts. *Rocky Horror* is traditionally taught by rote. Therefore, in my effort to renovate the *Rocky Horror* score, I took away part of the gospel tradition that was inherently a part of *The Rocky Horror Show* before I even touched it.
CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION

Headlam notes several themes in the appropriation of gospel music into pop styles. Perhaps the most important is a “political and social one.” He states, “The entry of black music into white society mirrored gains in rights of blacks themselves” (185). While the purpose of this discussion is not to highlight the oppression and racism African-Americans have faced, it must not go overlooked, as it is the backbone of gospel music.

Tracy claims that Blacks are more likely to “[exist] below the poverty level, [experience] discrimination in housing, employment, education, and discriminatory attitudes that associate the ‘race’ with intellectual inferiority” (89). African-Americans had overwhelming obstacles to overcome and they used their music to “[deliver] a message that was a culmination of these various pressures and prohibitions” and shaped them into “the optimistic art of the creator” (90). Music became their salvation, their way to cope with and overcome the obstacles set before them.

Conceivably, *The Rocky Horror Show* had a similar effect on the acceptance of alternative lifestyles. One might argue the entry of *The Rocky Horror Show* mirrored social gains and acceptance for those struggling with sexual identity. As a cult, *Rocky* has become “multi-generational,” according to Barry Bostwick, who played Brad Majors in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Michaels 274). At the time of its conception, *Rocky* was ahead of society’s readiness to accept alternative lifestyles. Through the generations since, *The Rocky Horror* phenomenon provided a refuge for those struggling to find themselves in a world that would not support their personal choices.
Gospel music provided me a vehicle with which to revitalize *The Rocky Horror Show*. Originally, I wanted to use gospel because the style spoke to me, and I knew it would provide an effective update to the score. At the time, I did not realize that the therapy African-Americans received through gospel music would so closely parallel the therapy and acceptance *Rocky* fans potentially received through *The Rocky Horror Show*.

Since the University of Central Florida (UCF) production of *The Rocky Horror Show*, I have been in contact with Samuel French (the rental company and rights holder to *The Rocky Horror Show*) about my score. They have expressed interest in using my final score as an additional part of their leasing package for *The Rocky Horror Show*. Because of this interest, and ongoing negotiations, I am not able to include my score (which is the bulk of my thesis work) in this document. If things continue to move forward, my version of the score would be obtainable through Samuel French at [www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com).
CHAPTER SIX - JOURNAL


Before I settled on “Rocky Horror” as my thesis project, I was brainstorming a few ideas. Dr. Roberta Sloan, our former department chair, mentioned the idea of “Baby” as a thesis project for our entire class. She actually chose the show, she said, so we would each have “thesis-worthy roles”. The more I thought about that show, the less I connected to it. I could have done that project, but I wanted to truly connect to a project in which I intended to put a lot of time and effort.

The other idea I came up with involved multimedia. I was going to turn my cabaret, for Spring 2007 semester, into a one-man show revolving around one character at the beginning and end of his career as a jazz singer. My intentions were to video record the character of the old man and as he would “flash-back” to his younger self, I would appear on stage. I thoroughly brainstormed this idea, and still intend to attempt it one day. It was around this time Earl and I started speaking about me music directing “Rocky Horror”.

At this point in 2006, we were not yet told that John Bell was leaving for De Sales University. I emailed John Bell to set up a meeting to discuss my thesis idea with him, and it was in this meeting that he suggested using “Rocky Horror” as my thesis project – an option I hadn’t considered until that moment. What follows are my journal entries from the confirmation of that meeting onward.
June 1, 2006 – 1st Entry

I received an email confirmation today from John Bell about our first meeting on this project. I want to outline my idea for him and get his feedback. I want to see if he deems it as “thesis-worthy” and if he can guide me toward a process, assuming he approve it.

June 6, 2006

(Many of the notes from this meeting are not included as they pertain to my original idea)

I mentioned to John that Earl and I had discussed the option of me music directing the spring production of “Rocky Horror Show”. He suggested I think about this as my thesis project and the following:

- Problems in the score
- Teaching techniques
- Write about the collaborative process

June 28, 2006

I have a thesis project!!! A lot has happened since my last entry. The biggest of which is John’s leaving. Since then, I spoke with Earl and Dr. Steve. My thesis project is going to be music directing UCF’s spring production of “Rocky Horror Show”. This will be a challenge because I will need to lift/arrange the entire vocal score and create something from which the band can read. I wish to accomplish the following:
• Vocal score with accompaniment
• Band score
  o Match rehearsal letters to both
• Calendar with due dates for each song (in the next week)
• Outline/roadmap for each song before I arrange it
• A chart comparing each song on each recording (maybe)

August 7, 2006

I have been listening to several cast recordings of “The Rocky Horror Show” over the last weeks. I’ve been waiting for some inspiration to find out just what I want to do with it. I decided that if I am going to put the work into lifting vocal parts from recordings, then I would rather direct that energy into rearranging the songs in a different style. I am sure I will still lift direct “ideas” from recordings, but I hope to flesh them out more harmonically than I am hearing on any of the recordings. I received Earl’s approval on this desire when he said, “It’s your show baby… do it! Have fun with it!”

August 14, 2006

It dawned on me today while listening to the New Broadway Cast recording of “Once In A While” that I could make this song work really well as a gospel number. I told Earl the idea and he loved it! I have great ideas in my head about what I want to do with this. I’m thinking the arrangement of “Oh, Happy Day” from the Edwin Hawkins Singers, or Sister Act 2, the more popular recording at this point.
August 17, 2006

The more I think about doing “Once In A While” as a gospel tune, I am finding that the entire score lends itself nicely to the gospel style, or at least a style that is gospel influenced/inspired. My thesis project is starting to shape into something. I would like to do something new with “The Rocky Horror Show”. It is a well-known piece of theatre that could even be considered to have a “cult” following. I would like to bring a new energy to the piece while maintaining the roots, which made it a hit in the first place. Somewhere in this paragraph is my thesis statement.

August 20, 2006

I created a calendar with due dates for each song today. I printed a copy to give to Earl and Dr. Steve. I intend to send the songs to Dr. Steve as I finish them. I realize with Baby and classes going on, the schedule I’ve set is lofty. However, I’ve left myself room for leeway, and will do the best I can to stick by it. First on the list are “Once In A While” and “Science Fiction”

September 3, 2006

I finished the choral parts for “Once In A While” and “Science Fiction”. I need to decide how detailed I’m going to get on the Rhythm parts. My decision for the drummer is just to give him the parts the ensemble will be singing and have him catch the fills or “fill in the holes” as my undergrad professor always said. The pianist/organist and bass player should be fine with the “changes” (chord symbols) provided. The original hand-
written score provided by Samuel French is limited, but the piano part in it should be a
good place to start for rehearsal purposes. I intend to flesh it out a bit more, but it will
work well. I also need to write down specific entrances for each instrument. This will
cut down on confusion at the first band rehearsal. Question: Should I wait until all
songs are done to do this?

October 13, 2006

Well, it’s been over a month since my last journal entry, and I’m already behind
schedule. We are now in our second week of performances for Baby and I have only
finished 5 of the 21 songs:

- “Once In A While”
- “Science Fiction”
- “Frankenstein Place”
- “Damn It, Janet”
- “Time Warp”

On the calendar I made for myself, I set the goal of having 14 songs done by now.
Well, I said it was lofty! I’m not worried because I know once Baby is over I’ll have a lot
more time. My brother and his wife get in tomorrow from Oregon. They are staying for
a week, so I’ve already decided I’m putting “Rocky” on hold while they are here. I want
to enjoy them as I only see them once or twice a year. I’ll check back in a few weeks.

November 1, 2006

So this is the week I had planned for tying up loose ends in the score.
Meaning… I was supposed to have everything done. Well… not quite. But that’s ok!
What is important is that I finish by the end of the semester so the cast can take the score home with them. Before that, I need to get the audition pieces done first, so I need to reprioritize to make that happen. Below are the songs I want for audition callbacks. I need to finish these by Thanksgiving weekend:

- Brad
  - “Once In A While”
  - “Floor Show”
- Janet
  - “Frankenstein”
  - “Touch Me”
  - “Floor Show”
- Frank
  - “Sweet Transvestite”
  - “Planet Schmanet”
  - “Charles Atlas”
- Riff Raff
  - “Frankenstein”
  - “Time Warp”
- Magenta
  - “Time Warp”
- Columbia
  - “Floor Show”
  - “Time Warp”
- Rocky
  - “Damocles”
  - “Floor Show”
- Dr. Scott
  - “Eddie’s Teddy”
- Usherette
  - “Science Fiction”
- Narrator
  - “Sword of Damocles”
  - “Time Warp”
  - “Eddie’s Teddy”
- Ushers
  - “Eddie’s Teddy” a cappella ensemble section

November 19, 2006

First round of auditions are tonight. We go through Tuesday night. I’m looking forward to the process. I finished all of the necessary songs for callbacks! I moved right through this last bunch. I’ve now completed 12 songs, and am finding it is going much more smoothly. It has been a year and a half or so since I’ve done any writing, so I just needed to find my groove again.
November 22, 2006

Wow! Auditions were a whirlwind. Earl, Tim and I have the list of callbacks. We actually agreed on most everybody. Those that we didn't, we included on the callback list for now. Earl is going to pare it down a little and email us the final callback list. I really did enjoy this process, and am even more excited for callbacks. That is the first time I'll get to work hands on with the students, and the first time I'll get to hear the ensemble sing something I've written. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and I have four days of nothing but “Rocky” music on my agenda. I intend to finish the rest of the score this weekend.

November 25, 2006

I've been working on the score almost non-stop. I'm so tired of looking at this computer screen, but I'm making great progress. I am definitely going to finish this weekend.

November 27, 2006

Tonight is the first round of callbacks. Earl put a schedule together for the order of the callbacks. I sent PDF files of all the audition cuts for each character to Earl and Hannah Kugelman (stage manager) via email. We are ready to go! I have made a list of expectations for which I’m looking in each character. This will help me maneuver my portion of the callbacks in an organized fashion.
November 30, 2006

Cast list was posted tonight! Callbacks went very well, and I enjoyed them very much. Tim and I did not get to be a part of the final casting meeting as we expected because the directors of each show for Spring were all ready to get that done. It went rather smoothly from the sounds of it, and I don’t think us being there would have made any difference. Though, I was curious to see that part of the process as well and am disappointed it didn’t happen. Disappointment aside, casting was a success! We have an excellent cast. I couldn’t be more pleased if Tim Curry were flying in to reprise the role himself! Although, I’m sure he would do just fine.

The score is completely done and in an electronic format. I emailed it to Earl and he will have it printed for the cast to pick up before they leave on holiday. I also dropped off listening CD’s I made for the cast and band members. I don’t know if they will take advantage of this amazing tool, but I hope they will. It is a gospel listening CD that will help them grasp the concept and style I hope to achieve with this production.

I leave for Oregon for the holidays next week. I am placing “Rocky Horror” on hold until I return after Christmas. Rehearsals don’t start until mid-February, and before that I have “The Mystery of Edwin Drood” rehearsals/performances and auditions at UPTA in Memphis, TN. My next journal entry won’t be until close to our first rehearsal on Monday, February 12, 2007.
February 7, 2007

We have our first rehearsal on Monday. I can’t believe it’s here already. It’s been some time since making an entry. I’m intimidated at the task I’m about to undertake but excited. While there may be some rough patches, I’m confident I’ll do a good job. Below is the schedule I have planned for Tuesday night:

- **Time Warp p. 28**
  - Start at Letter C-D
  - Skip to M-N
  - Run Song
- **Floor Show p. 114**
  - Start at Letter K-L
  - Skip to Letter M, measure 160
  - Run Letter M to the end
  - Run Song
- **Over at the Frankenstein Place p. 17**
  - Rehearse the beginning (Fugue)
  - Add Rehearsal Letters to score
  - Rehearse Letters B,D and coming out of Letter E to the end
  - Run Song
- **Planet Schmanet p. 108**
  - Rehearse m. 36-37
  - Run Song
- **Charles Atlas p. 71**
  - Explain Rubato Feeling and the responsibility of the chorus in this piece
  - Explain Frank’s responsibility in this piece
  - Start at beginning and go

February 13, 2007

My brain is fried, but I had a blast! It is so nice to hear the music after putting in so much work and time. We got through everything planned for tonight, though we will definitely have to go back and review details and nuances. The ensemble really does sound good. I had a well-planned rehearsal, but my next schedule needs to have more specific times for each song.
I was disappointed to find that several people hadn’t looked at their music as thoroughly as I hoped. Considering they have had the music for almost two full months, this is very disappointing. I could tell that many people were singing what was on the New Broadway cast recording as opposed to what was on the page. However, there were a few who had done their homework. The sopranos stood out tonight – particularly Madison Stratton.

Despite this, we did make it through and they do sound great! I am pleased. I believe I set the bar high tonight, and they will come tomorrow ready to go, knowing what I expect. My process was a little bumpy. I started out slightly jagged, and was not communicating well. Once I got over the initial hump and nervousness, the pace flowed quite well. I think I will only get better at this.
Below is a rehearsal plan for tomorrow night:

6:45 – Warm up
• Find ‘do’
• Chromatic scale exercise
• Solfege and “My Country…” exercise
• Layered solfege exercise

7:00 – Time Warp (p. 28)
• Dr. Steve noticed a wrong interval in the bass section while observing last night’s rehearsal – fix this.

7:05 – Eddy’s Teddy (p. 99)
• Start m. 32-33
• Skip to p. 106, m. 78 “Whoa
• Rehearse final measure of song
• Run entire song

7:30 – Damn it, Janet (p. 9)
• Start at pickup to Letter C
• Rehearse Letter E
• Rehearse Letter G
• Run Song

8:00 – Super Heroes (p. 132)
• Start m. 25
• Run Song

8:20 – Space Ship (p. 130)
• Rehearse repeated ensemble part
• Explain order of song
• Run Song

8:40 – Break
8:50 – Hot Patootie (p. 65)
• Start Letter E-end
• Rehearse Letter C-E
• Run Song

9:30 – Science Fiction (p. 2)
• Start Letter D – end
• Rehearse Letter B
• Run Song

10:00 – end
February 14, 2007

Wow, we are really plowing through stuff! I think by Sunday we will have made it through everything. This means Sunday we can work details and possibly even run the show musically. I am much more pleased tonight with everybody’s focus and preparation. I also think I was more relaxed and communicated more clearly. I am exhausted but really enjoying myself. Tim and I switched rehearsals for tomorrow night and Sunday. So, I have tomorrow off to prepare for Friday.

February 15, 2007

Tonight’s rehearsal was awesome! I left Wednesday letting the cast know I was feeling good about the way things were going but also let them know the areas in which I felt they were under-prepared. I asked them to come in tonight with those areas fixed. They certainly came through! The cast has really stepped up and we have now made it through all of the music except two reprises. I will cover those on Sunday and then we will run the show from top to bottom. I left rehearsal tonight on a complete high! I feel like I’ve really found my groove and it feels good to be in front of an ensemble again.
I misplaced the schedule I wrote out for tonight’s rehearsal, but below is the schedule for our next rehearsal on Sunday February 18, 2007:

2:00 – Brad and Janet Music Review
3:00 – Riff Raff/Frank Music Review
4:00 – Narrator/Doc Scott Music Review
5:00 – Dinner Break
7:00 – Science Fiction Reprise (p. 135)
7:05 – Tabs (p. 138)
7:15 – Science Fiction (p. 6)

7:25 – Over at the Frankenstein Place (p. 17)
7:35 – Tim Warp (p. 38)
7:40 – The Charles Atlas Song (p. 60)
7:50 – Once In A While (p. 90)
8:00 – Planet Schmanet/Damn it, Janet (p. 110/p. 12)
8:05 – Break
8:10 - Run Show

• Remind them of the syncopated “Whoa”
• Run Letter E to the end
• Fugue

• Tap Vamp (Letter L)
• Run
• Letter A to the end
• m. 36-37
• m. 39-42

• With whatever time remains, we will work details that did or did not surface during the run-through.

February 18, 2007

We made it through the whole show with time to spare. There was a lot of chatter and a lack of attention to detail. I attribute this to being tired. It was a very long day for all of us. Earl gave them a talk about halfway through and brought their focus back to the task at hand. I reminded them of the details which needed attention, even though I won’t be there rehearsing them for a little bit. This is a good bunch, and they are hard workers.
February 21, 2007

Tonight we did our first run, through “Touch-a Touch Me”. My notes give a measurement of where the cast is at this point with the details I’ve been trying to cultivate. To protect people, I’ve removed names and specificity, and will summarize my overall notes.

Tonight’s run-through went very well considering it was our first one. The overall note from each number requested more confidence from every member of the cast. Cut-offs were sloppy, and are usually the last thing to get everybody to fall in line with. I have a feeling I will be on this cast until opening night with cut-offs. Certain members of the ensemble were not matching the vowel they were singing to the rest of the ensemble. Lyrics were still a problem at this point, and need to be fixed immediately. Musical nuances such as, swelling through the resolution in Science Fiction, scoops when assigned, ebb and flow in the fugue, still need to be addressed. Some cast members, and even ensemble sections as a whole are experiencing pitch problems. Final consonants need to be crisp and arrive together. Improving cut-offs will tighten this. We still need to find directions in the phrases as an ensemble.

February 28, 2007

It has been a week since I heard the cast. I’m anxious to see the progress they’ve made in blocking and dancing, and to see how many details they held onto from what we worked on. For Once In A While I asked “Brad” to improvise in a gospel style
from the key change to the end of the song. I didn't want him to sing what was on the page. He is having a hard time with this. I am going to write him out a new melody that sounds “improvised” to learn. I hesitate with this, because it defeats the purpose of improvisation, but I think it needs to be done. Below is a summary of my notes from this rehearsal that I gave to the cast:

Some members of the cast are still missing details in the lyrics, or just plain getting them wrong. Tenors were much improved tonight, while the basses are still missing clarity as a section. The cast overall needs more energy and confidence in their sound. Cut-offs were improved, but not tight yet. Musicality notes: Still need more directions in the phrases as an ensemble, accents and final consonants. While the cut-offs are tighter in places, it is important that as we cut-off together, we also energize the release.

Everyone: There was much improvement from the last time I heard you. We just need to keep working details so they stay fresh in your mind. From here on, we have to pick up every rehearsal where we leave the previous, so details aren't forgotten. You are all working so hard and doing a great job. Thank you!

March 4, 2007

We had a music review today. It went well, and the cast came in ready to work on the things for which I asked them to be ready. Kate came in and observed me today. I’m very pleased with the way rehearsal went, and she had some great feedback. Many things she mentioned, I hadn’t thought of and will implement. Other points she made
were points in which I agreed with, and had been trying to achieve, but the chorus just wasn’t getting it yet. BUT… they will! One point she made is that “Science Fiction” is too slow for the opening number. Tim has been asking me to speed this up for some time, and I really have been fighting it. I wanted it to be much more mellow, and the energy to come from the story Sam is telling. However, I see the point of the opening number needing to have more energy in its tempo. I spoke with Geoff (piano player), and we both agreed that we would pick up the tempo.

Most of the details the cast is overlooking are forgotten once they begin to dance. Therefore I had them dance while singing the songs. I was in front of them giving them the appropriate cutoffs. It was amusing to see how many of them finally realized, “OHHHH, that’s where you want the cutoff!” Many light bulbs turned on tonight.

March 5, 2007

The entire experience has been such a positive one until now. On Friday night I found out we don’t have a bass player for the show. I was and still am floored at this discovery. I simply cannot comprehend this oversight. Even more upsetting to me is the thought that this wasn’t an oversight. From what I can gather, the choice was made to hire a saxophone in place of a bass. Furthermore, the bass is a necessity for such an ensemble while the saxophone is merely icing on the cake. It is great if we have enough in the budget for a saxophone, but certainly not essential, and should not be considered before a bass is hired.
I expressed my concern on Saturday, March 3 that I was not involved in the process of hiring the band. I have spent a countless amount of hours on the arrangements for this show with a specific sound and specific instruments in mind. I was not contacted once to even be asked which instruments I had in mind for the show. Of course, I never dreamt that it would be necessary to ask if I would want a bass player for “The Rocky Horror Show”, a rock based musical. Several band members were also amazed and disappointed at the fact that no bass player was hired.

I took my concern to Earl on Sunday March 4 before rehearsal started at 2:00 pm. Earl was very attentive and kind enough to listen to my venting and concerns. I also expressed my disappointment to Earl that I was left out of the hiring process. The fact of the matter is, if I had been given an opportunity to review the final band configuration, this entire issue could have been skirted, and the budget would not have been affected in any way whatsoever. I presented him with the following ideas I had on how we can fix this problem:

- Geoff Schofstall, our pianist, mentioned friends that might do it for free
- I would contact the music department and see if any students were interested in volunteering.
- We buy out the saxophonist’s contract and put the remaining money that we didn't pay her into a bass player.
- Hire Todd Davis, an undergrad in the theatre department, to play for TPP credit.

Earl informed me that two of these ideas are not a possibility, and I am actively pursuing the avenue of finding a volunteer. Today I called Jeffrey Rupert, director of Jazz Studies at the UCF Music Department. He suggested two of his students. I called one, and emailed both of them with a schedule attached. I know for certain one of them
is considering the gig and will get back to me. I also sent an email to the music department at Stetson University. I called Chuck Archard at Rollins University and am waiting to hear back from him. Michael Allen Hill, is an adjunct double bass professor at UCF. He also forwarded my email along to five of his students and seems interested in helping find someone. These are promising options.

This situation is very discouraging because of how much time I put in. Since I am going for a specific Gospel sound, I know how much the bass would add to the score. There are certain songs in particular that would be moved to an entirely new level. Part of me feels that I am not being taken seriously. I feel that if this mistake had been made while a competent professor was in the position I am, different measures would be taken to rectify this situation. The excuse I was given for this was that there simply wasn’t room in the budget for a bass player. In reality, there was room in the budget, and it was spent on a saxophone instead.

March 6, 2007

In reference to Saturday and Sunday’s Band Rehearsals – March 3-4, 2007

Everything about the bass aside... The band sounds great. We will make the show work and still sound good without a bass player, if necessary. I expressed to the band immediately that I wanted this to be a collaborative process. I gave them all CD’s and notes back in December expressing this desire as well. It turned out to be just that. We listened again to the CD’s I sent them and played through songs. Everybody had ideas for different parts of different songs. I enjoyed the process very much.
The most difficult part of the two days was dealing with a certain band member who is quite a firecracker. It is as if she is testing me to see just how much I will take. I have a thick skin and learned quickly that I can’t back down. Even though she has more years of experience than I, I know this score, and I know what I want. I remained confident and specific in my answers to her. This seemed to help. Every single other band member came up to me and made one reference or another about this band member. She is a very difficult personality. I am sure it is good practice for me.

March 18, 2007 – Sitzprobe

This was the third rehearsal with the band. It took some time to get in sync again because we had to incorporate a bass player! Yes, we found somebody to volunteer! His name is Nick, and I am very grateful to him. The band sounds great, and the ensemble came back from Spring Break completely prepared for this. I couldn’t be happier with the results. Great Rehearsal.

Two band members were late today for both rehearsals. This is unacceptable and I expressed frustration to both of them and also spoke with Jim Brown. There are measures in place to deal with situations such as these (band members are paid, and may be fined), but these measures were overlooked… once again.

March 19 – March 29, 2007

From this period we had several runs of the show. Again, I omitted my specific notes to protect those involved. Before we started any runs I discussed microphones with the cast:
Mics are there to amplify the sound you already make. Do NOT alter the way you have been singing, and do NOT rely on the microphones to make you heard!

The notes taken during this period are on nuances and details. I am still reminding the cast of details on cut-offs, confidence and energy. Overall we have a great show. The biggest frustration I’ve had during this time is inconsistencies in sound, and the fact that not everybody is mic’d.

March 28, 2007 – Final Dress Run

I’m proud of the cast. Sound is still an issue. Last night was the best it has been, but I’m nervous because tonight was a huge slip downward from last night. We haven’t had any two nights of consistency. I fear the integrity of the work is compromised by what is being amplified. I’ve expressed my concerns to the sound designer several times over the past couple of weeks. He knows my apprehension, and it is out of my hands at this point.

March 29, 2007 – Opening Night

Tonight went well. There were some major sound issues. That aside, the show was well received. Kate came up to me after the show and congratulated me and let me know that she was going to send an email to the sound designer regarding the sound, and urged that I do the same. I will do so tomorrow morning first thing, and cc Kate.
(a copy of the email is pasted below. I include it because it summarizes my thoughts on the sound problems overall… not just opening night. I’ve once again excluded some names to protect those involved.)

I would like to have written this email last night or even earlier this morning, but I haven’t had a chance. I apologize for it coming this late in the morning. Thank you for your work on the show.

My notes:

Please anticipate entrances. There were several times last night that a soloist would start speaking or singing, and the mic would pop on after they had already started their phrase. This also applies to ensemble, specifically the Tranny Trio. Their entrance on Sweet Transvestite has not yet been anticipated… last night or in rehearsals. Frank sings through the entire form, and Brad has his spoken part before the trio enters. Please use Brad’s dialogue in that section as your cue to turn on the trio.

Balance - along with Kate and Tim’s notes I want to point out the balance with the trio is off. I did not hear all three parts once last night. By the third time they sang (Touch-a Touch Me) I could hear Trio #1, and bits of the other two. They need to sound as one cohesive unit. All three parts must be prevalent. I would also say that the style of their songs and the way they are written in fits with the soloist in such a way that you don’t need to have them at the same level as you would a "back-up ensemble". Their levels could be almost as prevalent as the soloist. They will fit and not overpower… I promise.
Sound consistency. Over the last couple of weeks, we have not had any two nights of sound levels the same. Every night has been a new surprise. We need to find consistency ASAP. I believe the best sound we've had thus far was on Tuesday night. The balance was the best it has been. I could understand lyrics; I could hear all voice parts. The trio still needed to be bumped up, but they sounded better than any other night.

I encourage you to follow Kate's advice of having a group sound check to find a balanced sound with the band. Please add to that a sound check with the entire trio and the band. Since I will not be there tonight to help with this, please make sure somebody is in the house that can give you feedback. I say this because the sound in the house is drastically different than the sound under the overhang where the soundboard is located.

Please strive to find the balance and sound we had on Tuesday night and to keep it consistent for the remainder of the run. Again thank you for your work, and feel free to write or call if I can answer any more questions.

Kip

March 30, 2007

The arrangements are done, rehearsals are done and the show was open. I've been working on this for a very long time, and I can’t believe it's almost over. Time to start the writing of the thesis!
APPENDIX
LETTER OF COPYRIGHT PERMISSION FROM SAMUEL FRENCH
Sean Warwick
Licensing Associate
Professional Leasing
Samuel French, Inc.
45 West 25th Street
New York, NY 10010-2751

June 19, 2007

Dear Mr. Warwick:

This letter will confirm our recent email correspondence. I am completing a master's degree at the University of Central Florida focusing on my arrangements of "The Rocky Horror Show." I would like your permission to reprint in my thesis a full copy of:

*Science Fiction, Double Feature*

and excerpts from:

*Time Warp and Sweet Transvestite*

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my thesis, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own or your company owns the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me via fax at 386.258.7083. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kip Taisey

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Permission granted for the use requested above:

By: [Signature]

Date: 6/19/07

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REFERENCES


