

Spotting a Song

The marriage of book, music and lyrics

Spotting: *The act of creating possibilities for songs that might fulfill the dramatic needs of a musical scene.*

How do you heighten an emotion in a scene?

Either:

Increase the stakes. (A stronger need.)

Or

Increase the conflict. (A stronger opponent.)

Action Series

1. He wants something.
2. He does something to get what he wants.
3. Either he gets what he wants, in which case he wants something else (#1) or
4. He doesn't get what he wants, in which case he does something else (#2)

Motivational Questions

1. What does he want?
2. Why?
3. Who opposes him?
4. Why?

Force of Opposition

1. Man v. his World ("Extra-personal conflict")
2. Man v. Society ("Personal Conflict")
3. Man v. Himself ("Inner Conflict")

The purpose of a song in a musical

- Reveal a truth
- Keep the story going throughout the song, to the very last bar.
- Point the story forward
- Coincide with the emotional climax, the story climax, and the musical climax of a scene

Something must change during a song

1. **Exposition** - Someone knows something more than at the song's beginning.
2. **Action** - characters do things, to change things.
3. **Conflict** - could be heightened or resolved.
4. **Character** - is changed through the arc of a song.

Spotting a Song - Part Two

Character Change During a Song

- Joining forces
- Self-discovery
- Resolve a confrontation/conflict
- Enflame a confrontation/conflict
- Decision-making

Songs which are not driven by story

- Reverie/reflection
- Excuse-for-a-Dance
- Unspotted sung-through

A Checklist To Aid in Spotting A Song

1. Which character has the highest emotional stakes in the scene? Generally that's the character who'll be the most likely candidate for a song.
2. What is the main action of the scene? Can you encompass that action in a song structure like AABA or ABAC?
3. Where does a character take action, or make a decision? Can that be a song?
4. Where's the strongest conflict in the scene? What if that became a song?
5. What is the topic of the song? Songs should be about one thing.
6. Find a moment in which you can push your character to the point beyond which he cannot speak; if there isn't one in the scene yet, re-examine the need for the scene. You might need to increase the stakes, or make his force of opposition stronger in order to drive him beyond the point of speech.
7. Does your song create a strong sense of "What's going to happen next?" at its conclusion? (If not, go back to the drawing board.)
8. Can music alone tell the story (that is, *must* you have lyrics or dialogue)?

Lastly, ask yourself these three questions

- Can you replace the first half of the scene with a song?
- Can you replace the second half of the scene with a song?
- Can you delete either half of the scene and replace what remains with a song?